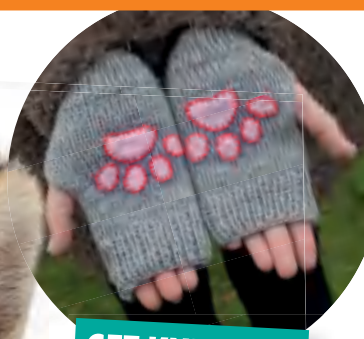


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Your essential guide to understanding feline body language

39 STYLISH SAFETY COLLARS & TAGS

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NEVER MISS AN ISSUE!
Turn to page 34 for an unmissable subscription offer...

HELLO!



Photo: Warren Photographic

Welcome to the February issue of Your Cat — and a very happy New Year to you all! Here's to a fabulous 2016 with readers around the globe — and all of your gorgeous cats, of course!

As with many things in life, communication is key when it comes to cat ownership — and many owners can often accidentally misinterpret their cat's body language, as top feline welfare consultant Lauren Finka explains in this issue. If your cat has ever been enjoying a good stroke before lashing out and biting your hand, you'll definitely want to turn to page 20, where Lauren reveals the secrets of feline communication and explains how we can 'be more cat'!

If you're thinking of getting a new cat or kitten this year, please do take a moment to read our advice about buying online on page 78. Sadly, despite many charity-led campaigns and petitions shouting about the cause throughout 2015, 'backyard breeders' and irresponsible sellers are still out there, selling often sickly kittens and puppies to unsuspecting buyers. With so many cats and kittens patiently awaiting homes in rescue centres around the country, why not pay one of them a visit? You never know who you might fall in love with!

One charity that really is making a difference to the animals in its care is HSAM (Help the Street Animals of Morocco). Co-founded by UK vet nurse Claire Sedgwick, HSAM has come to the aid of an incredible 3,745 cats to date, treating many of them on the spot in a pioneering new approach to street animal care. Turn to page 40 to read our interview with Claire, and prepare to be wowed by the dedication of the HSAM team!

If you enjoyed last month's crochet kitty cat hat pattern, you'll love the knitted paw print glove pattern in this issue — turn to page 29 — and don't forget to share your crafty creations on our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages.

Finally, don't miss this month's competition to win one of five fantastic prize bundles from Tigga Towers! Turn to page 19 to enter — and good luck!

Until next time, happy reading!

Chloë

Chloë Holland, editor
chloe@yourcat.co.uk

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EDITOR'S PICK

"I've fallen in love with the Australian Mist after reading this month's purrfect pedigree feature - turn to page 74!"



Quote of the month

"The way to get on with a cat is to treat it as an equal — or even better, as the superior it knows itself to be." ~ Elizabeth Peters

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Free gift...
...for every new subscriber*! Turn to page 34!
(*UK only)



Cover photo: Mark Taylor/Warren Photographic

PHOTO FEATURE

IN RETROSPECT

Having graced the covers of magazines, advertising and pet food packaging over the past 40 years, veteran photographer Walter Chandoha shares some of his most iconic images.







Photos: Walter Chandoha









Born in 1920, New Jersey-born Walter Chandoha is a photographer and writer of 40 years. His images of cats have appeared in countless magazines, advertising campaigns and pet food packaging, along with 30 published books of his work. But how did it all start for the man known as 'The Cat Photographer'?

"The reason I first started working with cats is that one day, coming home, I found a kitten in the snow," says Walter. "A little grey cat who we came to call Loco. It was Loco's photos that first earned me a little recognition.

"When I first started shooting, it was mostly black and white. But by the start of the 1950s, magazines started using more colour. So I said to my wife, who was also my art director: 'Why don't we try something with a Christmas motif, and in colour?' We shot a few scenes, including a cat with a bow on it, and submitted them to a few places. One day, the phone rang. It was an art director from 'Woman's Home Companion' and he said: 'I've got a nice surprise for you. We're going to go with your kitten on our Christmas cover.' That was a major accomplishment.

"Once I made the sale, I started to photograph cats in different scenarios — for example, cats in politics, or cats in Hollywood. I'd put a relevant caption on it and send it to the paper and they'd give me a whole page for it. Then I got into cat food. Most of my cats have been used in advertising to sell other products. You'd be surprised where they turned up — my cat photos even ended up on a package for brassieres!

"In the beginning, in the late '40s, I didn't have a studio. I would just take pictures around the house. But when we moved to Huntington, New York, I took one of the bedrooms and turned it into a studio. My most important tool, though — the secret to my success — was my wife, Maria, who was the animal charmer and handler. I couldn't have done it without her. She'd hold the kittens together and cajole them.

"I would say, for my photographs, I like the eye contact. I'd miaow or bark. Sounded like a barnyard! I'd tap the hood of the camera and they'd look right into the lens. And that's the way you get the right eye contact.

"I've photographed other animals, puppies and dogs, but they just never had the same appeal. Cats are just naturally expressive and they get into such a variety of situations. Cats are their own people and they'll do what they darn well please!" ■

Walter's new book, 'Walter Chandoha: The Cat Photographer', is priced at £19.95 (hardback), published by Aperture. ***We have one copy to win — turn to page 90!***

Win!



Lauren and Barry.

Don't miss Lauren's guide to understanding feline body language on page 20!

New research aids rehoming

Studies into cat behaviour by feline welfare consultant Lauren Finka have revealed inconsistencies in the current models and perceptions of certain behaviour used in rehoming cats.

Co-sponsored by the Centre of Applied Pet Ethology (COAPE), Lauren has developed a more robust way of monitoring behaviour, which has important implications in rehoming rescued cats.

Her studies showed that the physical and social context of interactions could change on a daily basis, so certain behaviours, such as rubbing, may not be as important in assessing a cat's underlying temperament.

During this research, the Lincoln Cat Assessment Tool (L-CAT) was developed — the first of its kind to offer a reliable way of assessing behaviour in cats at rehoming centres, as well as predicting new owner satisfaction. Further tests show that L-CAT could also be used to predict future behaviour of rehomed cats.

The welfare implications of such a tool are substantial: both cats and potential owners will be quickly assessed and suitably matched, meaning that some kitties may not have to wait as long for their forever homes.



Photo: Courtesy of Allan Pollock

Picture of the month

This incredible shot is totally claw-some! The photograph of an Amur tiger was taken at RZSS Highland Wildlife Park by visitor Allan Pollock. Six-year-old Dominika looks like she's having great fun climbing the trees in her enclosure, which she shares with male tiger Marty.

'Big Cat Diary' lions poisoned



Photo: Courtesy of Patrick Reynolds, Governors Camp Collection

One of the pride's lions, Tatu, in recovery.

Three lions from the Masai Mara National Reserve's Marsh pride in Kenya — featured in the BBC TV series 'Big Cat Diary' — have sadly died as a result of poisoning.

It's believed that up to eight lions were affected after eating from a cow carcass laced with poison on December 5. Lioness Bibi, who was well-known on the TV programme, was the first to succumb to the poisoning. The body of another cat, believed to be lioness Sienna, was also found. Sadly, a young male called Alan had to be euthanised after he was trampled by buffalo when he was still too weak to avoid the attack.

Thankfully, the surviving lions have been released back into the savannah and, at the time of writing, appeared to be recovering well.

The pride was not the only wildlife to suffer — 11 endangered white-backed vultures also died after eating from the carcass, and officials believe several hyenas may have been affected.

Two local herdsmen are believed to be behind the tragedy.

CATTITUDE by Anthony Smith




The new boutique.

Cattitude boutique opens

A new Cats Protection concept shop, Cattitude, has opened in Bewdley, Worcs, offering specially selected, exclusive ladies' clothing and accessories.

Deputy store manager Yvonne Dawson says: "We are very excited to be the first Cattitude shop in the country. This is a great place for people to buy their loved ones some high quality, fantastic gifts at great prices. In addition, they will know that the money they spend here will be going towards helping cats and kittens up and down the country."

Manager Dawn Harvey and her team are on hand to offer ideas and help for those looking for something special.

If successful, Cats Protection hopes to open more Cattitude boutiques across the UK throughout 2016.

Are Brum pets the laziest?

A new survey by retailer Mattress Online has suggested that pets in Birmingham are the laziest in the country, after 59 per cent of owners there revealed they resort to bribery to get their four-legged friends exercising more.

Over two thirds of Birmingham owners believe their pet is lazy, whilst 62 per cent say their pet has put on weight due to a lack of exercise.

Nationally, around half of UK pet owners view their pet at lethargic. The UK's most active pets are apparently in Manchester, where only 30 per cent of owners deem their pets as lazy.

Lazy pet leaderboard

1. Birmingham
2. Leeds
3. Edinburgh
4. London
5. Nottingham
6. Bristol
7. Southampton
8. Cardiff
9. Liverpool
10. Sheffield

DIARY DATES

January 22

Preston Cats Protection is hosting its first ever Variety Night from 7.30pm, featuring Songs from the Shows, at Our Lady & St Gerard's Parochial Centre, Brownedge Road, Lostock Hall, Lancs. PR5 5AA. For more details, contact the branch on tel. **01772 393949** or visit **www.cats.org.uk/preston**

January 23 & 25

Celebrate Burns Night at Edinburgh Zoo, with two special evenings planned from 7pm to 11pm at the Jungle Cafe, 134 Corstorphine Road, EH12 6TS. Enjoy a dram or glass of Prosecco on arrival, followed by a three-course Scottish menu and entertainment by The Big Shoogle. Tickets cost £30, or £27 for members. To book or for more information, email **events.edinburghzoo@compass-group.co.uk** or tel. **0131 314 0336**.

February 7

RSPCA's Northamptonshire branch is holding a Cat Rehoming Day from 12pm to 3pm at the Animal Medical Centre, 1 The Drive, Kingsley, NN1 4RY. Come along to meet, cuddle, reserve and adopt the kitties looking for forever homes. Contact Emma Markham at **adoptions@rspca-northamptonshire.org.uk** or tel. **07840 926122** for more details.

February 13

Do you know a young person who would love to work in animal welfare? Wood Green is holding a Rescue Worker for a Day event for 15- to 17-year-olds from 10am at its Godmanchester centre, PE29 2NH. Have fun, gain knowledge from experts and make a difference to an animal's life — it costs £65 to book on tel. **0844 248 8181 ext 1281** or email **handson@woodgreen.org.uk**

NEW RESEARCH BY CHURCHILL PET INSURANCE HAS FOUND THAT 45% OF UK ADULTS PREFER DOGS TO CATS, WHILST JUST 23% PREFER CATS. NEARLY ONE IN 10 PREFER NEITHER!

BOOK SHOP

For your chance to win, turn to page 90.



'BUCKINGHAM' BY JOHN SCHROEDER
A mix of fantasy and reality, 'Buckingham' is a story about the calming powers of cats and how they can positively affect human lives. Anyone who has ever felt calmed by their cat will find this an interesting read.
Price: £10.99 (paperback).



'BLACK CAT, WHITE CAT' BY SILVIA BORANDO
Black Cat can only come out during the day, while White Cat only ventures out at night. Find out what happens when the two cats meet in this adorable children's book, with sweet illustrations throughout.
Price: £9.99 (hardback).



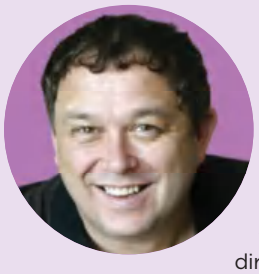
'COUNTING LIONS' BY STEPHEN WALTON AND KATIE COTTON
With incredible full-page black and white drawings, 'Counting Lions' runs through some of nature's wildest creatures, as well as revealing facts about these fantastic animals.
Price: £14.99 (hardback).



'IS THERE A DOG IN THIS BOOK?' BY VIVIANE SCHWARZ
From award-winning illustrator Viviane Schwarz, 'Is There a Dog in This Book?' follows three cats hiding from a dog. This hilarious book is full of interactive extras to keep animal-loving kids entertained.
Price: £6.99 (paperback).

CONFESSIONS OF A

Cat sitter



A Somali trickster has cat sitter Chris Pascoe wound around her little paw...

Last month, I talked about my making a minor communications error. Well, I say a 'minor' error, but only if phoning a cat and asking him to fix your leaking roof can be deemed minor.

The very next day, I discovered I'm not the only one with communication problems when a customer, who's away on holiday, sent me a message that had me staring at my phone screen in astonishment. English isn't actually her first language and, whilst she speaks it well, there are clearly some intricacies that might not yet be fully understood:

'Hi Chris, how's our cats? We have favour to ask. Our toddler saw cats today and suddenly did a massive cat-sick. Would you mind take a couple of photos and email us pls? :)'

The intricacy being, of course, that the meanings of home-sick and cat-sick are not quite the same...

Anyway, carrying on with the subject of communications, I've been thinking a lot lately about the extent to which cats communicate with us. I realise that most people have better things to do with their time than ponder this sort of thing all day, but working with cats seven days a week, it's bound to cross my mind. The issue was brought to the forefront when a very beautiful little Somali named Florence appeared to not only communicate with me very well, but also pull an elaborate confidence trick.

Florence has quite a few issues with her housemate Benny. Benny is a typically uncomplicated tabby lad, thoroughly content and happy as long as food and strokes are readily available. He puts up with Florence's frequent hisses and growls, and despite looking totally perplexed as to what she's shouting about, offers no retaliation. At 6kg in weight to Florence's diminutive 2.5kg, it's a very good job for Florence that he doesn't.

I think it was because of the massive size difference that I was so concerned when, totally out of the blue during my visits last week, Benny suddenly attacked Florence. I was serving up breakfast when a piercing shriek from the hallway had me spilling thousands of Go-Cat biscuits in all directions. Seconds later, flying into the kitchen through the dry food debris, came Florence. She stopped at my feet and stared back towards the hall (and Benny), totally terrified. Looking up at me, she began miaowing unhappily, holding one paw gingerly in the air.

"Benny — NO! Bad boy, Benny," I said, with an over-elaborate glare. It was pretty clear he'd finally snapped and attacked, and bitten her in the process.

Or had he? My first clue was Florence's tail. Florence has an expressive tail and when she's frightened, it instantly bushes to four times its normal size. It wasn't bushed at all. Also, on closer inspection of Florence's paw, there didn't seem to be anything wrong with it at all. As Florence munched Go-Cat without a care in the world while Benny sat dejectedly in the hall, I began to suspect things weren't at all as a certain Somali had led me to believe. I went back to the hall and gave Benny some Dreamies — it was the least I could do.

A few seconds later, Florence sauntered past us with her tail held jauntily high, not a fear in the world... and, was it my imagination, or was she smirking? ■



The XLVets team.

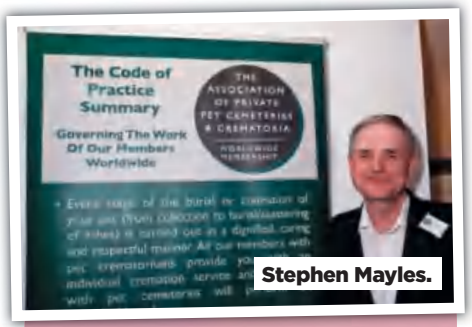
XLVets no-engine win

The XLVets community of independent vet practices has raised more than £30,000 in a charity challenge to travel the world without an engine.

To mark the 10th anniversary of XLVets, all 53 member practices joined in across the UK to travel 34,727 miles collectively — equal to one and a half times around the world — by running, kayaking, swimming, cycling and walking.

The money raised was split between practices' local chosen charities and Send a Cow, which has received £15,571.

Event organiser Jane Simpson says: "The XLVets practices have shown how independent practices can work together to achieve amazing results. The generosity of all those that have supported our efforts will make a real difference to the charities."



Stephen Mayles.

Cremation caution

After it was recently discovered that a crematorium in Staffordshire had been duping its customers into mistakenly thinking they had received the ashes of their deceased pets, the Association of Private Pet Cemeteries and Crematoria (APPCC) is reminding owners of the importance of using its registered operators.

Vice chairman Stephen Mayles urges vets and the public to do their homework on pet crematoria, adding: "Our members must operate with complete transparency and adhere to a strict code of practice."

Apart from an obligation to comply with waste disposal and the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading legislation, the pet cremation industry is unregulated. Stephen adds: "Many firms hide behind the fact they are inspected under the Animal By-Product regulations but that is highly misleading, as the inspections are not relevant to cremation services.

"That's the reason we came into being more than 20 years ago and have been imposing stringent rules on our members ever since. We are doing everything we can to ensure the high standards the public would rightly expect."

APPCC members are independently inspected to check how animals are handled and what will happen to their remains. For more information, visit **www.appcc.org.uk**

Wild nights in

Ever wanted a sleepover at a zoo? Tickets are now on sale for ZSL's Gir Lion Lodge, nestled in the heart of London Zoo's upcoming Land of the Lions exhibit.

The vibrant village of nine colourful private cabins was inspired by the guest houses of Sasan Gir on the outskirts of the Gir Forest, home to the world's last remaining population of wild Asiatic lions.

After a sumptuous meal, guests will be taken on an exclusive evening tour before heading back to the en-suite lodges. After waking to the sounds of the zoo's permanent residents, guests will be able to enjoy breakfast and then a morning tour of the zoo before it opens.

The overnight experience will be open from May 2016, with designated family and adults-only nights. Lodges have enough room for two adults and two children, and prices will start at £378 per couple — funds will be put towards ZSL's conservation projects.



An artist's impression of the cabin's interior.

Office gossip

DO YOU HAVE A KITTY CONVICT?

The makers of Exploding Kittens are seeking 'catonement' for their game by launching the Kitty Convict Project, encouraging owners to put orange collars on their indoor cats to mark them as 'escaped convicts' if they go missing outside.

GRUMPY CAT IMMORTALISED

The world's favourite ill-tempered kitty and Internet sensation, Grumpy Cat, has been introduced to her perfect imitation — an animatronic replica on display at Madame Tussauds San Francisco.



AGRIA'S CALENDAR GIVEAWAY

Agria Pet Insurance is offering a free copy of International Cat Care's 'The Beauty of Cats' 2016 calendar to every cat owner who purchases a new policy before January 31.

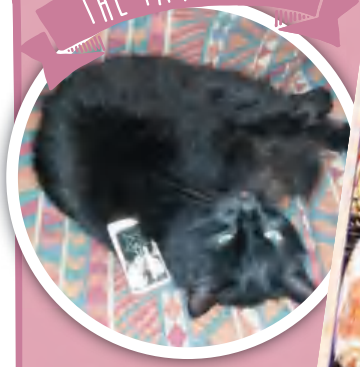
EAU DE CAT FOREHEAD

Japan's Yamamoto Perfumery has spent months in cat cafes to perfect its latest product: Fluffy Brow Scented Fabric Water. The fabric spray is designed to match what it smells like to bury your face in your cat's fur!

PICATSSO MASTERPIECE

Birmingham City University students have developed a new iPad game for cat lovers. Picatsso follows an artistic feline on the prowl for his stolen artwork, nabbed by the villainous canine, Vincent van Dog!

THE TAROT CAT





Hi there! I'm The Tarot Cat and I'm a tarot reader, counsellor and cat lover. In each issue of Your Cat, I provide a free tarot reading for one of you cat fanatics out there! I don't believe in predicting the future and I can't answer questions about your cat's behavioural problems or health issues. Through the tarot, I offer inspiration and advice for issues within your control which you're struggling with. Maybe you're falling out with your partner over your cat, or perhaps you can't decide whether to get a new cat or not; whatever the problem (whether deep or light-hearted), ask The Tarot Cat!

Q This month's question comes from John in London. John asks: "I'm falling out with my new housemate, Mike, over my cat, and it's becoming really uncomfortable between us. What can I do about it?"

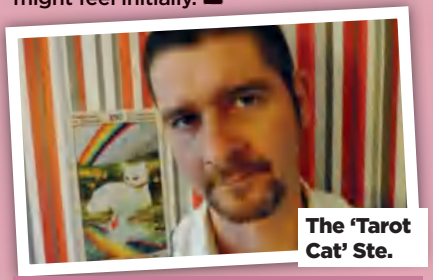
For John's reading, I used the Pagan Cats tarot deck by Magdelina Messina/Lola Airaghi (published by Lo Scarabeo) and I drew one card to offer advice for moving forward.

THE DEVIL

This does sound like a very uncomfortable situation for you, John. The Devil card shows two cats in chains; however, these (rather strange-looking) felines have a fairly aggressive appearance and don't seem to mind being stuck in a limited position. The Devil is a 'major arcana' tarot card, indicating that this situation is a major theme in your life right now, therefore it's important that this is handled properly. The Devil card often talks about those times when we fall into negative behavioural patterns to survive. Often these patterns can become our own undoing in the long run, yet we just can't help but indulge them in the short term!

There's a disruptive pattern going on here, John; perhaps something that you know isn't helping the situation but which you can't help doing during heated discussions with your housemate. I wonder if you're reacting too defensively with your housemate here, and if one or two things going on with your cat might be genuinely difficult for him to deal with. Has your cat perhaps been peeing in his bedroom, or does your flatmate have an allergy? With The Devil card, I even wonder if you recently did something a little vengeful to teach your housemate a lesson... but has this backfired? Whatever is going on, it seems that he's being uncompromising in his approach. However, I get the feeling from the card that you're being pretty uncompromising too, and you're perhaps falling into an old pattern of self-sabotage.

My advice is to call a truce and not get too caught up in the way your housemate is addressing this. Sit down and really listen to him — you'll probably find he does the same in return. Bite your tongue when he pushes your buttons, and explain calmly that your cat is really important to you, yet so is the atmosphere at home. I feel that by drawing up a few rules and keeping a calm approach, you can sort out this problem. It might mean having to restrict your kitty from a room or two in the house, but that's ok, isn't it? If you really enjoy where you live, it's worth challenging your defensiveness and starting afresh, no matter how hard it might feel initially. ■



The 'Tarot Cat' Ste.

To get a published reading, send your question and a little information about yourself to **chloe@yourcat.co.uk** with 'Tarot Cat' in the subject line. For more details, visit **www.tarotcat.org**

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A rescued flood victim.

Photo: Courtesy of FOUR PAWS/Bogdan Baraghin

Emergency aid for India

Animal welfare organisation FOUR PAWS sent an emergency team to Chennai, India, after the city was devastated by floods.

In addition to hundreds of people losing their lives, many animals were also affected by the disaster.

When FOUR PAWS heard that the headquarters and clinic of its partner, Blue Cross of India, were also under water, it immediately sent financial support, along with three vets, led by Dr Anca Tomescu and Jackson Zee, leader of the organisation's disaster relief department.

The team was active on site for two weeks and provided hundreds of cats, dogs, cattle and goats with food, treatment and shelter. Many animals had fled to rooftops to escape the water and needed rescuing.

At the time, Dr Tomescu said: "The veterinarians in India are very experienced, but they are simply overwhelmed with the sheer number of animals in need here and could use all the support they can get."

India has the largest number of stray animals in the world, with the population estimated at around 25 million dogs and five times as many cats.

Back in the wild

After 20 years chained in the back of a rusty pick-up truck in Peru, ex-circus mountain lion Mufasa has been returned to the forest by Animal Defenders International (ADI).

Wildlife officials and ADI rescued Mufasa, believed to be the last wild animal in a South American circus, last year. After being nursed back to health, he made a three-day journey by road and boat to an enclosure at the Taricaya Ecological Reserve in the Amazon rainforest.

Jan Creamer, ADI president, says: "It was heartbreaking to see Mufasa chained among the circus equipment. It is magical to see him moving about in and out of the trees in his own piece of protected forest."

Mufasa's rescue was part of the year-long Operation Spirit of Freedom mission by ADI, which has saved nearly 100 animals from circuses in Peru.

Watch Mufasa's amazing journey at www.yourcat.co.uk



Mufasa before his rescue.

Photo: Courtesy of ADI



Rescued circus lion Rey de Cusco.

Roar-some appeal

Readers may remember the record-breaking rescue of 33 lions from circuses in Colombia and Peru by Animal Defenders International (ADI). The organisation is now appealing for donations to help the lions in their new lives at Emoya Big Cat Sanctuary in South Africa. Find out how you can help at **lionsbacktoafrica.org/donate**

Vincent's first steps!

Iowa State University's Lloyd Veterinary Center has released a video of three-year-old domestic shorthair Vincent walking on titanium-alloy prosthetic hind legs.

Vincent's hind legs have been missing below the midway point of his shins since he was a kitten, but Dr Mary Sarah Bergh, an orthopaedic surgeon in the Department of Veterinary Clinical Sciences, thought she might be able to help.

She worked with BioMedtrix, a veterinary orthopaedics company, to design implants that could be inserted through Vincent's skin and into his femur bones. These allow his bone to grow onto the titanium shafts and support his weight.

Vincent has undergone two operations and several treatments to lengthen his new legs, and it's hoped that they will eventually be as long as those of an average cat.

Dr Bergh comments: "The implants are stable and he's walking really well on them. I anticipate he'll be jumping and doing normal cat things soon."



Vincent and his 'bionic' legs.

Watch an amazing video of Vincent using his new legs at www.yourcat.co.uk

Photo: Courtesy of Iowa State University News Service

Correction

In last month's buyer's guide to interactive toys (page 74), the PetSafe FroliCat Chatter and Petstages Cheese Chase 3-in-1 cat toys' product descriptions were unfortunately placed next to the incorrect images. We apologise for any confusion caused.



◀ Petstages Cheese Chase 3-in-1 cat toy, £14 from **www.petsathome.com** or tel. **0800 328 4204**.



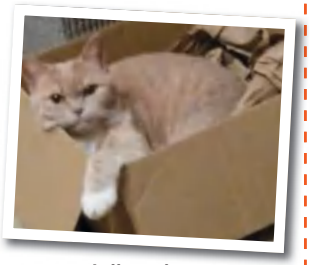
◀ PetSafe FroliCat Chatter, £18.99 from **www.petsafe.net** or tel. **0800 046 1414**.

We asked for your favourite photos...



▲ **Kate Powell:** My baby is 19, has no ears (skin cancer), no teeth and she is still going strong! Love my little zombie cat!

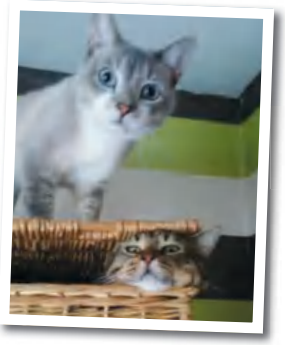
▼ **Elizabeth Mackman:** My beautiful Amy in her favourite cardboard box!



▼ **Dannielle Wheat Bowden:** Our Bengal Maisy and our Siamese Wila. Best friends for life.



▼ **Deanne Orchin:** Here is Walt and Jesse together xx



▼ **Neil Kearney:** Stealth is the key and they might not notice me on the bed!



CLAY COUNTY APPEAL



Felix came in after we were contacted by a local vet. His owner died three months ago and his grandchildren were caring for Felix until, due to an injury, he became so unwell that they couldn't afford vet treatment.

Felix is only two years old and really has a battle on his paws. The vet informed us his wound was so bad on arrival that it must have been there for at least a year. The end of his tail has a nasty trauma and we may have to remove it. He has urine burns on his legs and bottom as well.

To add to the list of traumas, Felix also has a deformity to his back paw. The vet feels it's an old injury which had likely been caused by being trapped somewhere and was left untreated.

He will need surgery in the very near future, so we are asking if any of your readers could possibly help towards his treatment, which is going to cost over £2,500.

Felix deserves every chance at life and finding a new home. If you are able to donate just a small amount, we would be so appreciative. You can donate via Paypal to **claycountycatcare@yahoo.co.uk**, by quoting Clay County Felix on tel. **01726 890887**, or via **www.gofundme.com/felixneedsyourhelp**

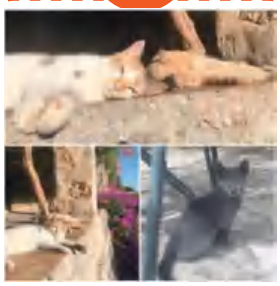
Thank you all so much in advance.

Gemma Menhenitt, St Austell, Cornwall.

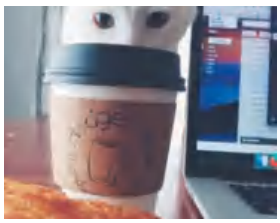
Write & win!

This month's star letter writer has won a PetSafe FroliCat™ CHEESE™ and a SlimCat® toy, worth a total of £28.98! Every other letter writer has won a SlimCat toy — simply fill with kibble or treats for a fun way to feed. Visit www.petsafe.net or tel. 0800 046 1414. Write to us by emailing catchat@yourcat.co.uk or by post (see page 3). *UK only





▲ **@OttilieQ:** If I were a #Mallorcean cat, I'd definitely go and live up in #Campanet @YourCatmagazine #cat #heaven



▲ **@annaCnorris:** I had my cat try to drink my coffee!!



▲ **@MamsterLynne:** @YourCatmagazine Where there's a box, there's a cat!

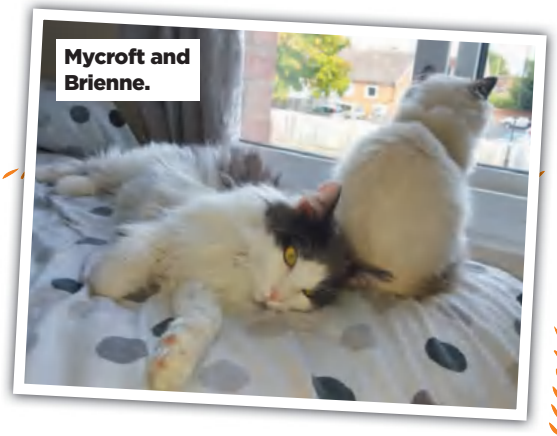


▲ **@NotPoshLady:** "Look hooman, I have looked after my #whiskerswednesday" @OliverTomCat @AwwwwCats @YourCatmagazine @TuxHeinrich

www.facebook.com/yourcatmagazine

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Mycroft and Brienne.

CHALK AND CHEESE

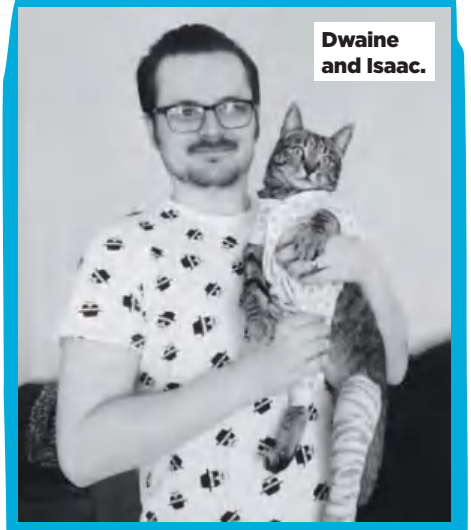
I am a recent subscriber to the magazine and really enjoy seeing all of the photos that readers send in!

I would like to show you this picture of my two cats: Mycroft, who is a year old (a cross between Maine Coon and British Shorthair), and Brienne, who is five months old (a cross between Birman and Siamese). They are both beautiful kittens who love each other very much — they're best friends!

They are both indoor cats but are kept more than occupied by each other. Mycroft is quite shy with visitors and people he doesn't know, but soon gives lots of love once he does. Brienne is the complete opposite, demanding love and attention from anyone that comes in the door.

It would make our day to see our two fur babies in your magazine amongst all the other beautiful kitties out there!

Chloë Toms, Bridgnorth, Salop.


Dwaine and Isaac.

CRAZY CAT MAN!

This is my husband Dwaine Lee with our rescue cat, Isaac, proving guys can be crazy cat people too!

In May 2015, Isaac was hit by a car outside our home. Luckily, he hadn't broken any bones but his knees were knocked out of place and he struggled to walk. He went on to have multiple surgeries to insert metal pins, but they didn't prove entirely successful.

Though the surgeries didn't fix his legs completely, he's learnt to get on with it. He can walk, run and play — it's hard to tell sometimes what he's been through. It has made our bond even stronger.

He's a loving, affectionate cat who loves his cuddles and head kisses. He likes to act like a dog and play fetch and he's learnt to give his paw for treats. We're thinking high five for his next trick!

Jade and Dwaine Lee, Barton-upon-Humber, Lincs.


Raiden, Hansel and Sakura.

FLUFFY FRIENDS

Here is our little bundle of cuteness: Raiden, Hansel and Sakura. Hansel is a little different to your normal Tonkinese with his fluffy coat and his head tilt. They are 12 weeks old now and an absolute joy to have.

Veronica Burns, Shotts, North Lanarks.

HYPERTHYROIDISM HELP

I would like to thank vet Dr Bradley Viner for his most interesting article on a disease found in elderly cats, hyperthyroidism (August 2015 issue). My beautiful silver tabby, Susie, who is 16 years old, was recently diagnosed with this serious condition. After a month's treatment, she is much better. Her fur has improved, but she is settled and not so talkative. She is a much-loved cat.

Please, owners, look out for signs of this in your cats. They can have very high blood pressure which leads to organ damage. My lovely cattery lady, Julie, thought Susie had this and, with the vet's help, she is much more content and quieter.

Veronica Sutherland, Peterborough, Cambs.

A SECOND CHANCE

A young cat had been brought in to our local animal rescue, who had been living rough in his finder's garden for around three months. There was no question about coming home without him as he chose us by being very vocal and nibbling our fingers!

He was around two years old then, which makes him now 14. Jasper's favourite treat is prawns, but they must be fresh, not frozen. In winter, he loves to sleep on a duvet in a cupboard above the wardrobe!

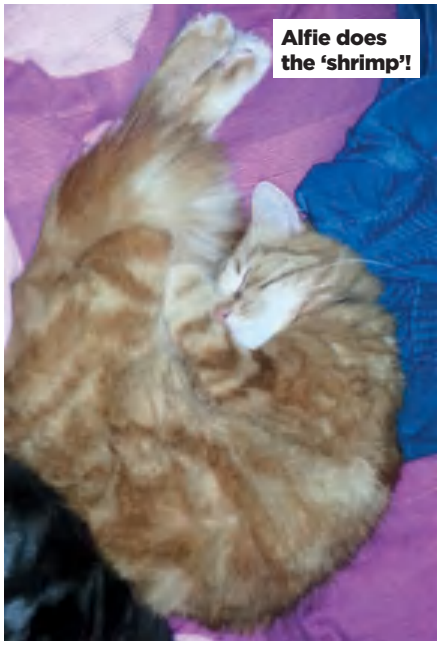
Jasper loves company so if we go out, he will sit looking out of the window, waiting for our return. I would recommend a rescue cat — they are so grateful for a second chance.

Marian Grimes, North Walsham, Norfolk.

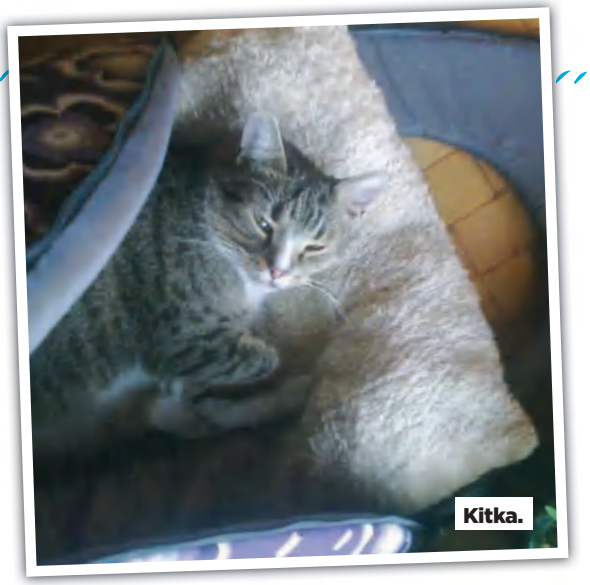

Jasper.

CAT SHRIMPING

I saw some pictures online recently about a new craze called 'cat shrimping', when a cat lies curled up and looks like a shrimp! So I couldn't resist taking a photo of my cat Alfie when I found him in this position!
Joanne Martin, Dingwall, Highland.


Alfie does the 'shrimp'!

KITKA THE FIGHTER


Kitka.

About four years ago, my husband and I found Kitka. She was in a terrible condition and must have caught herself in a snare; both her hind legs were crushed. Horrible.

My vet put her on a drip to ease the pain but she was too weak for surgery. She survived the night and we all fought for her life. One of the badly broken legs had to be amputated; it was a matter of life or death. She needed a second operation soon after to transplant skin to her other leg.

Amazingly, after the second surgery, she began to recover very quickly. She tried to walk and was more sure of herself with every careful step.

She appeared to be a very talkative girl, and she learned to climb her high scratch post by pulling herself up with her front legs. Now she can even run quite fast, like a small kangaroo!

Kitka is good-natured, cheerful and caring — and she quarrels loudly if something is not to her liking! For us, she is the loveliest, most gentle and calming creature. She is our great happiness and I've learnt more from her than I could imagine: never give up, everything is possible.
Małgorzata Nowak-Pasek, Poland.

PACK HUNTING

This is Max, Keiko, Scout and Molly... and somewhere in there is a mouse!
Geraldine Tinker, Bunclody, Co. Wexford, Republic of Ireland.


"Where'd he go?!"

HAPPY 17TH, SOPHIA!

I am writing this on the 17th birthday of my Tonkinese, Sophia. We've had her since she was 13 weeks old, and she is a lap cat and very loving. She loves to watch TV, especially cowboys.

At the moment, she is our only cat. For 11 years, we had another cat, Thomasinia, who sadly had to be put to sleep four years ago. Sometimes we consider getting another kitten but don't want to upset Sophia, now that she's over the loss of her friend.

We don't own Sophia; she owns us. We could not wish for a more special friend than her.
Sylvia Williams, Camborne, Cornwall.

CATCHING SOME ZZZ'S

I thought you might like to meet one of my trio! It's been a busy morning for Jackson, bless him — he couldn't keep his eyes open any longer!
Emma Sanderson, Sheffield, South Yorks.


Jackson.

WORD OF CAUTION

I would like to comment on the Cat Care question about feeding someone else's cat in the November issue of Your Cat magazine. Your expert was answering from the legal point of view but there is also a moral case to answer.

It may seem as though you are being kind to the cat by feeding it. However, if a cat comes to your door and is obviously well-fed and cared for, it is unfair to lure it away from its true owner.

Another consideration is that the cat may be on diabetic treatment or having other medication which is dependent on his diet. I have owned a diabetic cat in the past and I know that adherence to a strict routine of feeding and medication is critical to the cat's health.

Unless you know the cat and are absolutely certain that its owners will not mind, please do not feed any cat which is not your own and is evidently in good health.
Ruth Burkhill, Forres, Scotland.

FANTASTIC FELIX


Felix.

This is Felix. He's about one year old now. My mum and I rehomed him from the Scottish SPCA in Glasgow. He is a lovable, friendly, affectionate wee cat.

His name was originally Slade but I decided Felix suited him better. We lost our previous cat of 10 years. He passed away so suddenly and we'll never forget him, but we loved Felix as soon as we saw him.

Everyone we know says he was meant for us. It would be great to see him in the magazine.

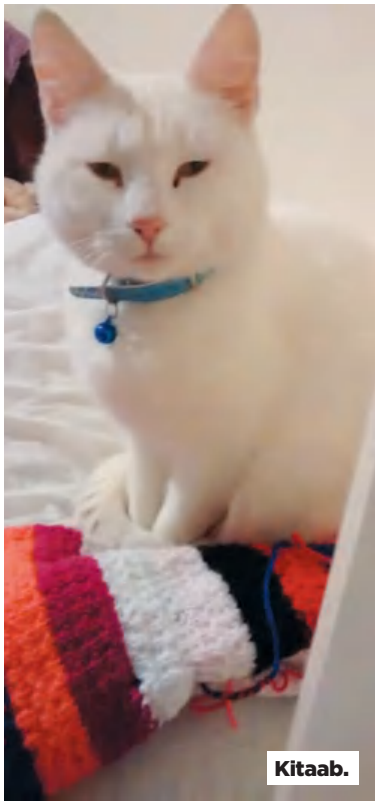
Margaret Cameron, Glasgow.

NEIGHBOURLY LOVE

I enclose a photo of a lovely, young white cat who has been visiting our home for a year now. Her name is Kitaab. She was left by her owners when they moved house, so we feed her, play with her etc. She even sleeps here, then she likes to go back out.

She is a regular part of our lives and, in a way, has become our cat, even though she does not belong to us.

Ghazala Khan, Leamington Spa, Warks.


Kitaab.


Oliver and Dewi.

MIELE WINNER

Thank you, Your Cat — what a wonderful surprise! A large box arrived and inside: a Miele vacuum cleaner. I couldn't believe it when I searched the box and found the label, 'Prizewinner Your Cat'.

Wow, I am over the moon and my home is practically free from cat hairs! Thank you again. I love the magazine and look forward to seeing it every month. Pictured are Oliver (lilac Burmese) and Dewi (chocolate Burmese) who have just had their 10th birthdays.

Sandra Porter, Barry, Wales.

SYMPATHY FOR CYPRUS

I have always loved and had cats as pets and really enjoy your magazine. I also enjoy my holidays in sunny Cyprus and especially love the cats there.

Protaras, near Larnaca, is a home away from home for us, and the cats we see there all seem to be well looked after and very tame.

I am glad there is a system to look after the stray cats in Cyprus and was inspired by the story featured in the November 2015 issue ('Saviours in Cyprus').

Mary Tushingham, Newtownards, Northern Ireland.

CATS ARE FOR LIFE

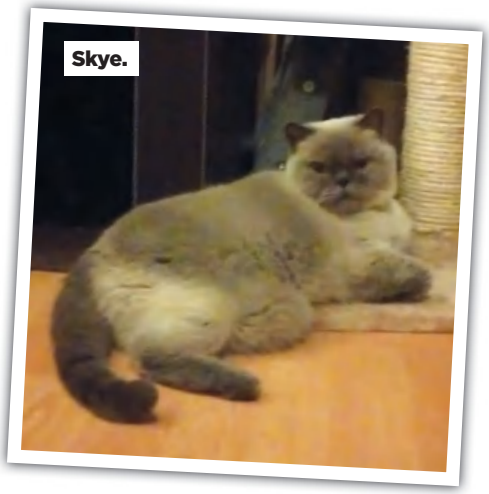
I would like to stress how important it is for people to do their research before buying a pedigree cat. Here is a picture of beautiful Skye, who is now coming up to 12 years old.

We rescued her last year after she had suffered terrible neglect through various homes. Our vet is certain she had been neglected for more than seven years, judging by her fur density and overall psychological reactions.

We have spent a lot on sorting out her health problems. Although her previous misfortunes have long since passed, I appeal to anyone: do not get caught up in the glamour of owning a pedigree cat.

Ask instead: do you have the time, facilities and respect to own a cat? A cat is for life — not an interior design accessory, cast aside when fashions change.

May Middleton, Rotherham, South Yorks.


Skye.

WIN a TIGGA TOWERS prize bundle!

5 to win!

We're giving five lucky readers the chance to win an amazing selection of luxury cat towers, beds and toys, courtesy of Tigga Towers!

Tigga Towers is offering five lucky Your Cat readers the chance to win an amazing selection of cat towers, beds and toys from its luxury product range!

The Tigga Towers product range includes the modular cat scratching tower system, luxurious soft bedding and catnip kicker toys. Created with natural materials and finishes, each product allows your feline friends to feel at home whether they are playing, exercising or sleeping, whilst being safe from even the sharpest cat claws and washable time after time. Available in a neutral colour palette, Tigga Towers products are designed to blend effortlessly into any home.

Tigga Towers cat scratching towers are currently the only modular system on the market in the UK. Using natural wicker beds and large scratch posts, each cat tower can be expanded and customised. The extra-large scratch posts provide the perfect activity centre for cats, allowing them to climb as though they are outdoors. Of course, they have the added bonus of lovely soft beds to take a cat nap on once they get to the top!

Tigga Towers also offers one of the largest ranges of super soft, cosy cat beds — from simple cat pillows to a luxury cat bed box, there is something for every feline. The new Cat Cave bed will provide the perfect hideaway and the top-selling doughnuts and exclusive range of double doughnuts are guaranteed to keep even the fussiest cat happy.

The kitten and cat kicker toys are larger than your usual toys. Made with Tigga Towers' super soft fabric, they encourage a cat's natural hunting instincts. The organic catnip and crinkle in the crinkle range adds noise when the cat is play hunting.

Visit **www.tiggatowers.com** for more information.





Q

How many Tigga Towers bundles are we giving away?

HOW TO ENTER

For your chance to win one of the prizes available, answer the question above and complete the form on page 90, or enter online at **www.yourcat.co.uk/giveaways** using code FYC16BLH. The closing date for online and postal entries is February 11, 2016. You can enter online from January 15, 2016.

WHAT YOU CAN WIN

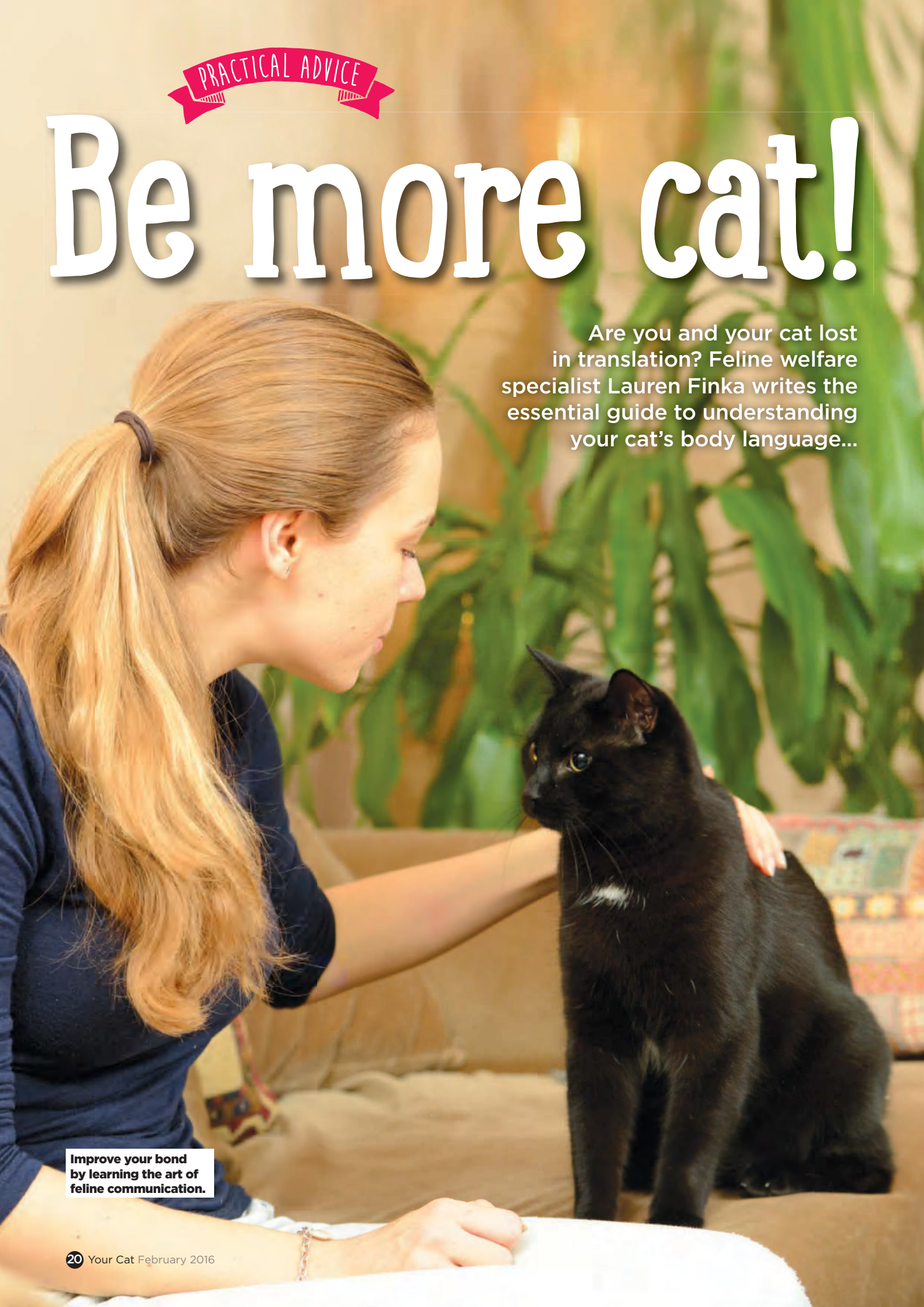
We have five prizes to give away, courtesy of Tigga Towers. The first prize winner will receive a Maxi Tigga Cat Scratching Tower (worth £635), the second prize winner will receive a Double Trouble Scratching Tower (worth £495) and the third prize winner will receive a Tiny Cat Tower (£244). One runner-up will receive a Round Double Doughnut Bed and Cat Bed Blanket bundle (worth £68), while a second runner-up will receive a Cat Head Igloo Bed and Caterpillar and Fish Bone Catnip Toys (worth £67.95).

T&Cs: Prizes are available in a selection of colours, subject to availability. Cat Tower bases will be Granite (oak option not available). Please check www.tiggatowers.com for colour options.

PRACTICAL ADVICE

Be more cat!

Are you and your cat lost in translation? Feline welfare specialist Lauren Finka writes the essential guide to understanding your cat's body language...



Improve your bond by learning the art of feline communication.



LAUREN FINKA is a research fellow at the University of Lincoln and a feline welfare consultant for Battersea Dogs and Cats Home.

In a relatively short period of about 10,000 years, the domestic cat has gone from being a solitary, territorial wildcat to a domestic pet that often lives in close proximity to humans and other cats, capable of forming social bonds with both.

Such a rapid move towards a more social lifestyle comes with an increasing need to communicate with others in ways that enable cooperation and the resolution of conflicts without coming to physical harm.

Domestic cats therefore have a far greater need for social communication and signalling than their wild counterparts. However, they are still genetically and behaviourally very similar to their asocial ancestors, so their ability to communicate socially is thought to be somewhat limited. In effect, domestic cats only have a restricted number of signals to 'choose from' when communicating, so often the same behaviour can mean very different things in a given context.

Whilst wildcats are highly skilled predators, they are also prey for larger carnivores and must therefore hide signs of being hurt or injured, to avoid seeming an easy target for predators. Domestic cats are very similar in this regard, and are equally good at hiding signs of pain and stress; any signs they do display can be very subtle (although there are exceptions!) and easily misinterpreted. This could be why cats are notoriously difficult to 'read', and in many ways remain a bit of an enigma.

As loving owners, it's our job to meet the needs of our cats as best we can. To do this, you need to know what signs to look out for to understand not only when your cat is happy and relaxed, but, very importantly, when he may be feeling stressed or uncomfortable. This is no easy task, but there are many subtle signs that we can keep an eye out for, providing useful cues for what your cat may be trying to communicate or how he may be feeling.

"Domestic cats only have a restricted number of signals to 'choose from' when communicating."



Cats will often give us signals when they would like to be stroked.



The 'tail up' social greeting.

Kitty communication

TAIL UP — Your cat raising his tail vertically in the air is a good example of a behaviour which originally had only a very functional purpose, but is now also used as a social greeting. Many species of cat raise their tails when spraying urine, but today's domestic cats also do this when approaching another cat or a person, usually also rubbing against them.

In this context, it is thought that the 'tail up' is used to send a clear signal of friendly or positive intentions, even at a distance — a bit like waving a white flag. If a cat approaches you with his tail held vertically, it means he sees you as friend rather than foe, and will probably enjoy a bit of a fuss.

RUBBING — When your cat rubs against you, this is often combined with purring and kneading and may suggest he wants to interact with you or be stroked. However, cats can also rub for a variety of other social and non-social reasons. Cats have several different scent glands on their faces, and may rub against objects to deposit this scent. When investigating an environment for the first time in particular, cats rub against prominent features to make them smell more familiar and reassuring.

On the other hand, unneutered females also rub objects to signal to males they are ready to mate. Entire males rub prominent environmental features to advertise their presence to other cats in a territorial display. When two cats rub against each other, they could be making a communal smell that helps to create a sense of familiarity and maintain a stable social group.

With humans, whilst cats often rub against us to encourage us to stroke or interact with them, sometimes they may simply want to make us smell more familiar, perhaps to create a communal scent, or even to advertise to other cats that we are part of their 'territory'.

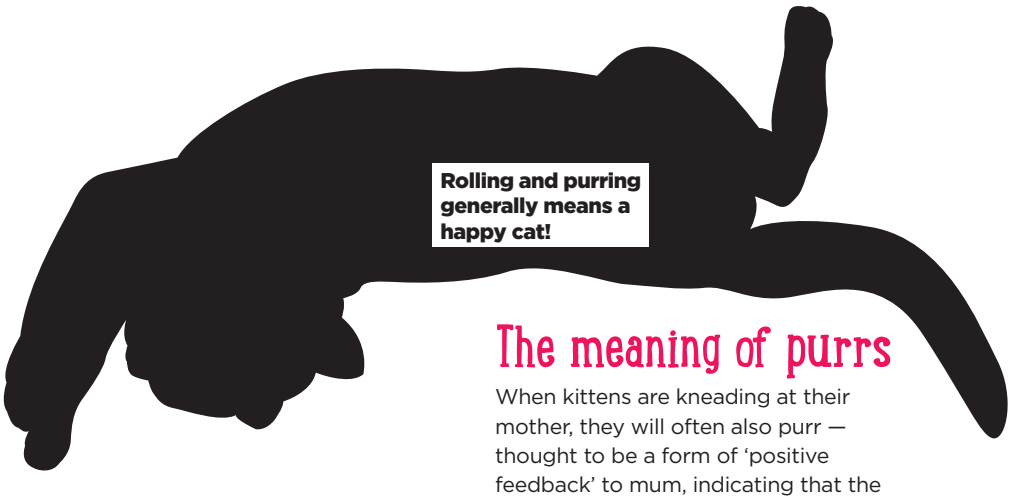
What's important is to pay attention to the behaviour and body language of your cat to gauge whether he actually wants you to stroke him or not. ▶



Cats will often rub against objects to make them smell more reassuring.



A short burst of scratching could be a subtle sign of conflict.



Rolling and purring generally means a happy cat!

Signs of conflict

Cats may experience a state of conflict when they feel stressed or uncomfortable and aren't sure what to do next. This could happen after an aggressive encounter with another cat, but interestingly, we also see many of these conflict behaviours during or just after interactions with humans, suggesting the cat is perhaps not comfortable with the interaction itself.

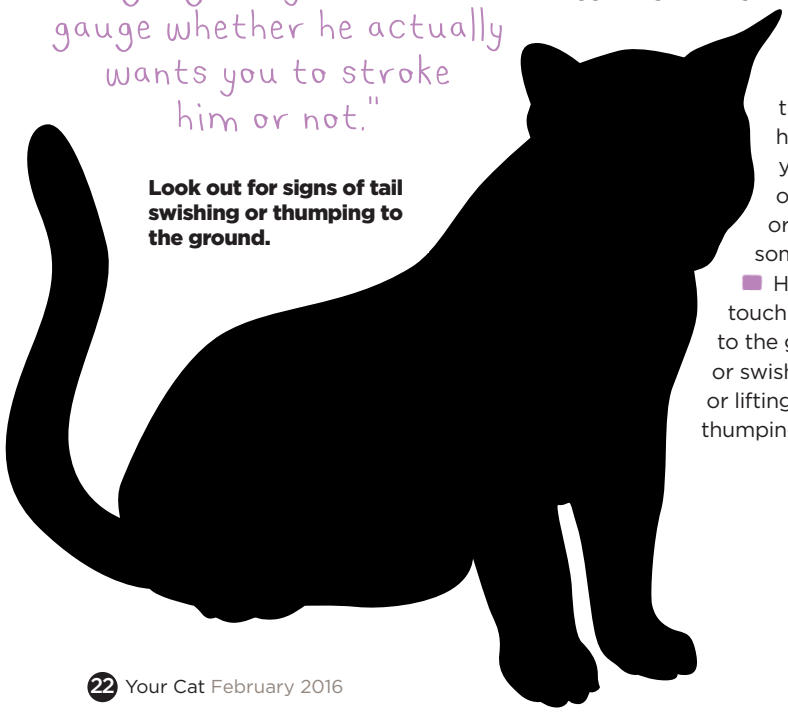
In these situations, some cats may behave aggressively (sending a very clear signal!) but others may display more subtle signs that are harder to pick up on, although they are just as informative. Some signs of conflict include:

- Brief shaking of the head or body
- A short, sudden burst of self-grooming or scratching
- Quickly flicking his tongue over his nose (also known as a 'lip lick')
- Tense posture — his legs and tail will usually be in contact with the floor and may be held close to the body. He may look 'hunched' or 'crouched'
- Flattened ears (usually both at once) towards his whiskers. His head and body may lower towards the ground too, suggesting he's frightened or worried
- One ear (or both) rotating towards the back of his head, suggesting your cat dislikes or is frustrated or annoyed by something
- His tail (normally touching or held close to the ground) twitching or swishing vigorously, or lifting up and then thumping on the ground.



A hunched cat may be unhappy.

"Pay attention to the behaviour and body language of your cat to gauge whether he actually wants you to stroke him or not."



Look out for signs of tail swishing or thumping to the ground.

The meaning of purrs

When kittens are kneading at their mother, they will often also purr — thought to be a form of 'positive feedback' to mum, indicating that the kitten is obtaining milk sufficiently.

Adult cats will purr when in contact with another familiar cat or person and when rolling or rubbing against inanimate objects. It's generally assumed that purring in these contexts may indicate a positive emotional state.

However, cats may also purr to motivate us to provide them with some sort of care (such as food). Research shows this type of purr contains a 'crying' sound hidden within it, which is similar to the noise that human babies make, and which we are biologically programmed to respond to — basically, cats are trying to manipulate us by tapping into our maternal and paternal instincts!

Cats may also purr when they are experiencing high levels of pain or distress, such as at the vets following an accident. In this context, the purr may be used as a way to 'ask' for help, although it's also thought cats may purr to calm themselves and promote self-healing.

Examining the behaviour and posture of your cat when he purrs (is he tense and hunched or is he relaxed and rubbing against you?), and considering the context within which the purring occurs (is he distressed or injured? Is it feeding or fuss time?) can help to decipher what his purring is likely to mean at that time.

The slow blink

Many people perceive a cat's slow blink as an indication that he is friendly and relaxed. Whilst this can sometimes be the case, many cats will also slow blink when they are feeling quite threatened and uncomfortable.

On its own, the slow blink may simply serve as an appeasing signal that lets us know the cat isn't a threat. However, this actually tells us very little about how the cat is feeling at the time.

To ensure that you correctly interpret this behaviour, as with the purr, it's important that you consider other aspects of your cat's behaviour and body language, as well as the context they are in (is he curled up on your lap at home or being examined at the vets?), in order to build up an overall picture.



A stroke can very quickly turn into a bite.

Did you know?

A cat's purr produces vibrations similar to those used by physical therapists to reduce pain from muscle injuries.

Understanding your cat

Whilst many behaviours displayed by your cat can be subtle and vary in meaning, he will certainly appreciate your attempts at understanding him! Here are three things that your cat would probably want you to know about him:

Not all cats are cut out to be pets — Just like humans, cats vary hugely in terms of how sociable they are. This is determined by their genes, their parents' temperaments and their experiences (particularly early on in life), and is not something that we can alter. If cats don't have the right temperament traits and were not carefully socialised when young, they may find living alongside people in later life very stressful.

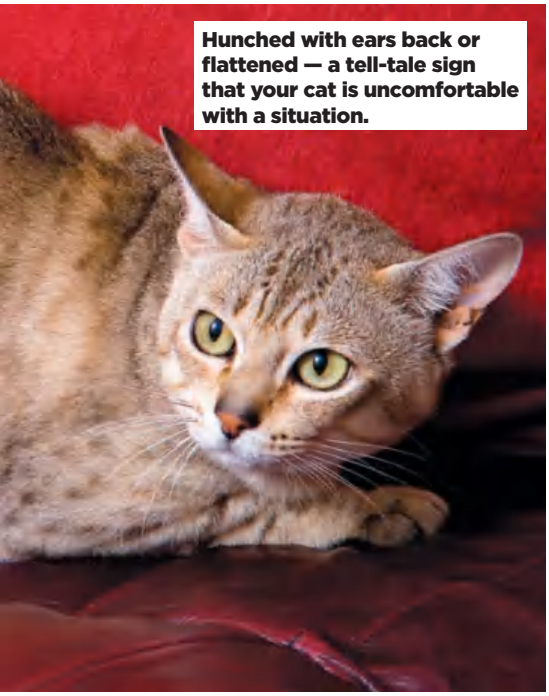
We probably touch cats a lot more that they want us to — Even when cats are friendly, the amount and type of handling they enjoy can vary between individuals, and some sociable cats may actually prefer a much more 'hands-off' relationship than we realise.

Cats are wonderfully furry and soft, and it's a natural instinct to want to pick them up or give them a good stroke. Whilst this may feel good for us, cats are a much less tactile species and may be merely tolerating rather than enjoying the interaction.

Cats are quite particular about where and how we stroke them — Many people find that when stroking their cat, he can go from being very affectionate and friendly to aggressive or grumpy in a matter of seconds. What's most likely happening is the cat has become increasingly overstimulated from the type or amount of handling, and as a result has begun to feel very uncomfortable.

Some cats will want just short amounts of stroking, and most will only prefer being touched around their facial glands (around their cheeks, chin or base of the ears). The aggressive behaviour is a cat's way of telling us he doesn't like where we are currently touching him, or that he has generally had enough. Whilst your cat may be giving off many subtle indications that he feels this way prior to behaving aggressively, we sadly often miss many of these and carry on stroking him until it's 'too late'.

The best way to avoid this situation is to let your cat dictate how much stroking/handling he would like. This way, he will feel more in control of what's going on and less likely to behave aggressively.



Hunched with ears back or flattened — a tell-tale sign that your cat is uncomfortable with a situation.

Correct Etti-cat

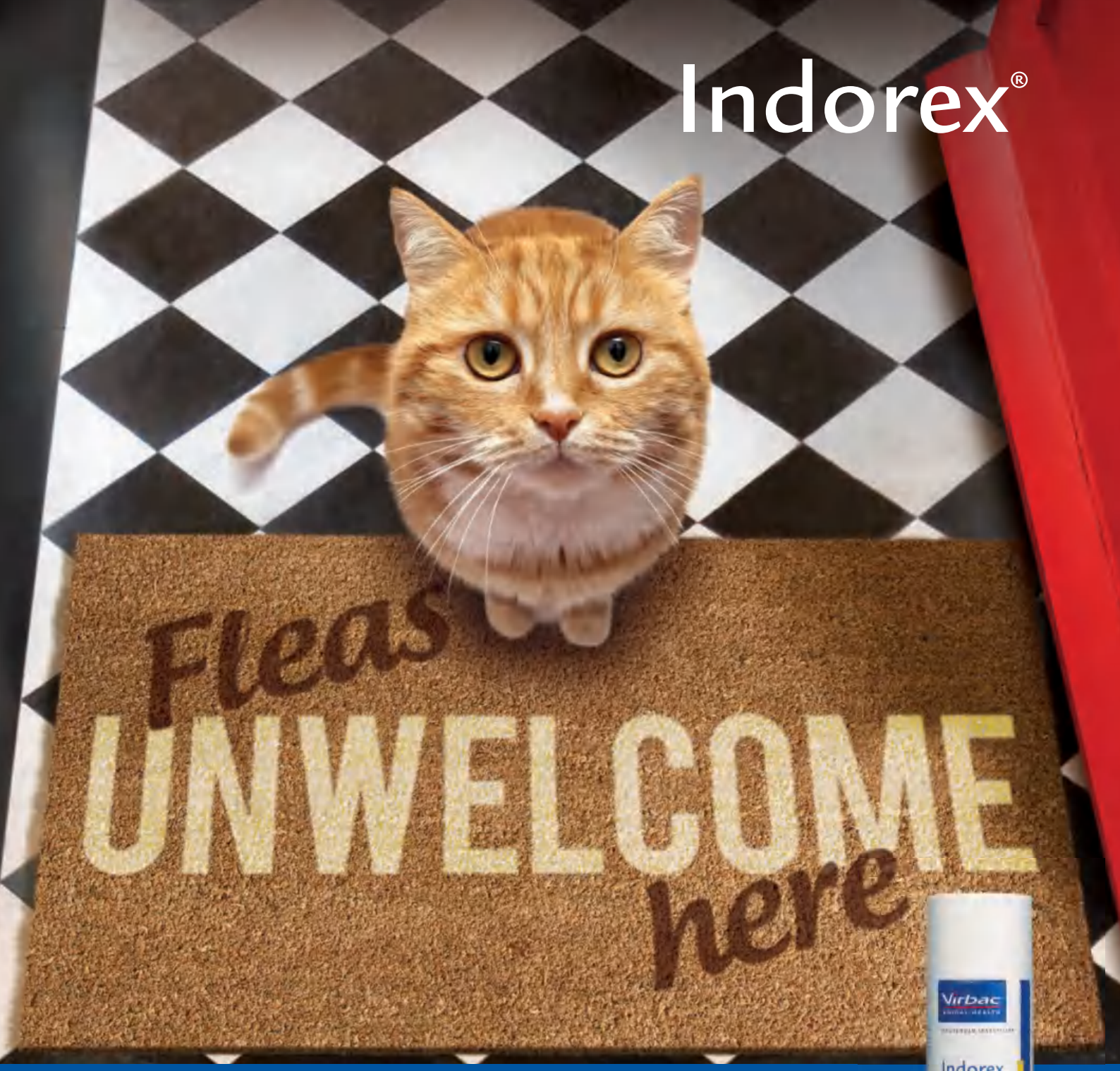
Recently adopted by Battersea Dogs and Cats Home as part of its new stress management programme, the following simple but incredibly effective step-by-step guide to interacting with cats has had some phenomenal results. The Home's cats are now less stressed and more eager to interact with people, massively boosting its rehoming figures. The four steps to interacting with your cat are:

1. **Start with a polite invitation** — Crouch down and offer your hand with the palm down to see if he wants to sniff or rub against it.
2. **Let him tell you where he wants to be touched** — If he rubs against you with a part of his body, you can gently stroke that area. If he doesn't make contact, this is probably a sign that he doesn't want to be touched at that time.
3. **Look out for signs that your cat isn't comfortable and give him a break if necessary** — If he moves away from you or shows any conflict signs, pause what you're doing and allow him to choose what happens next.

Additional signs of discomfort can include your cat turning his head sharply towards your hand or face or keeping his head turned away from you. His fur, usually on his back, may twitch or ripple as you stroke it, or he may abruptly stop purring or rubbing and go quite still instead.

4. **Let him make the next move** — After a short pause, you can offer your hand to your cat and start again when he's ready.

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For your chance to win prizes* turn to page 90 for the entry coupon or enter online at **www.yourcat.co.uk/giveaways** using the code FYC16BLH. The closing date for online and postal entries is February 11, 2016. Please note, you can enter online from January 15, 2016. Good luck! (*UK only)

TopLife Milk for Cats and Kittens

18 to win

Treat your cat or kitten this Valentine's Day with the purrfect gift. TopLife Milk for Cats and Kittens, made from lactose-reduced cows' milk, is a delicious daily treat that your furry friend will love. It contains added taurine to maintain healthy eyes and helps to keep your cat or kitten hydrated.

Visit **www.toplifeformula.com** or tel. **01565 750576** for more information and a detailed list of stockists.

**We have a month's supply of TopLife Milk for Cats or Kittens (18 200ml cartons) plus a TopLife re-usable pet bowl to give away to 18 lucky winners! Simply turn to page 90 and let us know whether you have a cat or kitten.*



Pet Munchies Premium Gourmet Cat Treats

36 to win

Award-winning Pet Munchies has launched a premium quality range of natural, gourmet, freeze-dried cat treats made from the finest ingredients. As well as being healthy, cats are said to love the taste. There are three succulent varieties of Pet Munchies treats to choose from: Gourmet Chicken Liver, Gourmet Beef Liver and Gourmet Fish Fillet.

Pet Munchies Premium Gourmet Cat Treats are super healthy and a rich source of vitamins and minerals, including Omega 3 and antioxidants, which help to maintain a healthy heart and promote healthy skin and coat. The high levels of calcium and selenium are great for teeth and support joint mobility. They contain no artificial flavours, colours or preservatives, are naturally hypo-allergenic and easily digestible. They cost £1.39 for a 10g pouch. Visit **www.pet-munchies.com**

**We have five pouches of Pet Munchies to give away to 36 lucky winners. Turn to page 90!*

National Pet Show Tickets

10 to win

The National Pet Show returns to ExCeL London on May 7-8, 2016, and you can be in with a chance of bagging yourself a pair of tickets!

With hundreds of different animals, amazing action displays, expert talks and many more activities, the National Pet Show provides an educational and entertaining weekend for pet lovers across the country.

From the cute and cuddly to the weird and wonderful, you can get up close and personal to your favourite animals and receive advice from top animal experts. Visit **www.thenationalpetshow.com** for more details.

**We have 10 pairs of tickets to the National Pet Show up for grabs*. Turn to page 90!*

**Tickets are valid on either day and are limited to one pair per winner.*

John Paul Pet™ Ultimate Grooming Bundle

1 to win

We are giving away the ultimate grooming bundle from John Paul Pet™, specifically designed with pets in mind — because they deserve the best care too. Including enough shampoo and conditioner to ensure your cat is perfectly pampered all year round, all products in the bundle are formulated to ensure they are the correct pH level for your cat, giving him the best grooming experience. Brought to you by the man behind Paul Mitchell® luxury hair care, you can be sure they use the finest ingredients for great results. Don't miss out on your chance to win this amazing prize!

**We have one John Paul Pet Ultimate Grooming Bundle to give away, including 25 cat-friendly grooming products, worth over £250 — turn to page 90.*



Enter online at www.yourcat.co.uk/giveaways

Fostering has changed my life

Nicola Davies describes the joys of fostering kittens for her local animal rescue centre.



Nicola.

I already had Sophie, Layla and Ziggy when I started fostering — all wonderful cats with unique personalities and enough energy and affection to keep me occupied for hours. I wanted more though! I wanted to spread my love further by looking after cats that were less fortunate than my own. Fostering seemed like the perfect option.

My first fostering experience was with a beautiful tabby queen called Lola. She was only two years old and still tiny when I took her in. She had about six weeks of pregnancy left, which we spent developing a strong relationship. We would lay together while I massaged her stomach, feeling the odd kick here and there.

I knew Lola was getting ready to give birth when she kept going to her bed, squatting and then coming back out. I sat on the floor, away from her but there if she needed me. To my joy, she chose to sit with me; she was letting me share the experience with her.

Everything went well and the biggest surprise was she had six little fur balls, as opposed to the predicted three!

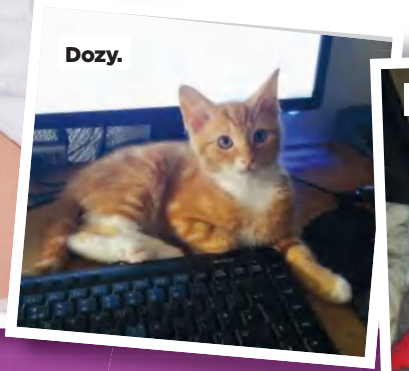
RAISING A LITTER

Lola was a fabulous mum and didn't leave their side for the first few days. On day two, she moved them one by one into the wardrobe for extra safety. She was a proud mum and I was a proud fosterer.

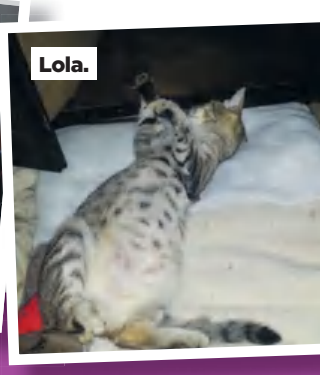
"Having to part with them at the end of the foster period can be extremely emotional."

It was now time to socialise these little bundles of cuteness, who I named Dexter, Super Hans, Jekyll, Freckle, TattyCoram and Little Dorrit. This involves training them to be friendly and sociable, as well as teaching them how to amuse themselves with toys (not that they needed much teaching — they kept each other amused!).

Every morning, when I opened the door to the cat sanctuary I had made them, I would be bombarded by six excited kittens, ready for

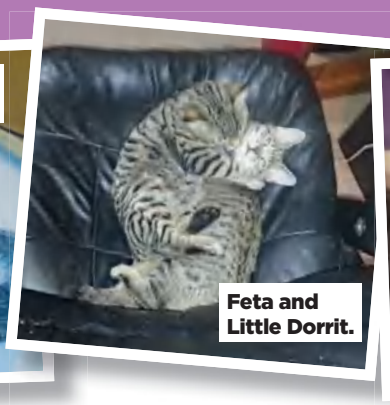


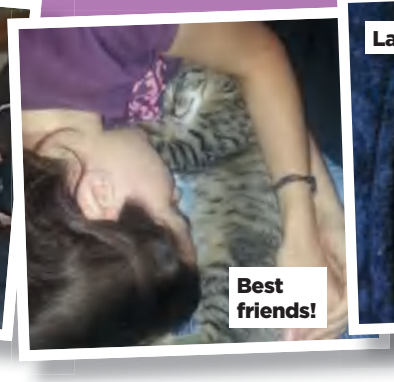
Dozy.

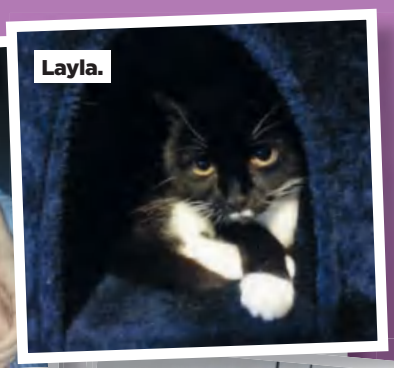


Lola.


Lola's kittens.


Feta and Little Dorrit.

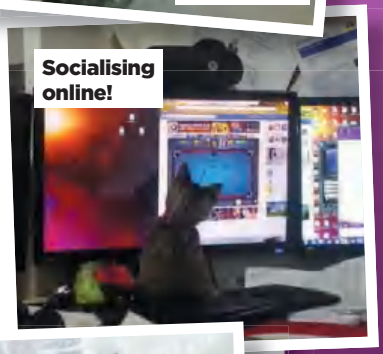

Best friends!


Layla.


Little Dorrit begging to come home!


Lola's kittens.


Lola supervises!


Socialising online!

more socialisation. How could such a sight not put a smile on your face? How could you not feel pride as they use the litter tray for the first time or bravely venture into another room?

Whenever my cats were out, I would give Lola and her kittens free run of the house; they loved bounding up and down the stairs and jumping out on each other. Little Dorrit would always be wherever I was, often watching the computer screen as I worked.

Fostering is a rewarding and enjoyable experience, but having to part with them at the end of the foster period can be extremely emotional. There was one kitten who stole my heart — Little Dorrit.

After dropping her and her siblings off at the animal shelter, my heart ached. I was even having flashbacks to her little face, peering out from behind a chair as I said goodbye. I couldn't stand it. I had to go back for her.

As I drove back home, Little Dorrit by my side, I wondered if I was a 'failed fosterer'. I stopped wondering when Little Dorrit yelped with joy at returning to her forever home. Today, at 18 months old, she is such a special little cat and has gently eased herself in with my three others.

A REWARDING TASK

My next experience was with Feta, another tabby kitten. Feta couldn't yet be adopted due to a heart condition that was being investigated. However, she was distressed at the animal shelter, so she found herself living with me.

She went from hiding under the wardrobe to a stroke-obsessed purring machine in seconds. And this sums Feta up — strokes, strokes, strokes. That is all she was interested in.

You really wouldn't have guessed she was ill either. She would run around and play until she was panting. She did everything any other kitten could and became best buddies with Little Dorrit.

"I wanted to spread my love further by looking after cats that were less fortunate than my own."

Tests revealed that while Feta had a hole in her heart, she should be fine and could be put up for adoption. I was concerned that her heart defect might make this difficult, but I shouldn't have worried — she's a farm cat now, roaming around with cows, sheep and horses.

With Little Dorrit growing up and exploring the outdoors more, the house was feeling far too calm without any kittens around — so I was pleased when my local animal rescue asked if I could foster a black and white feral kitten, Dave. Of course I could!

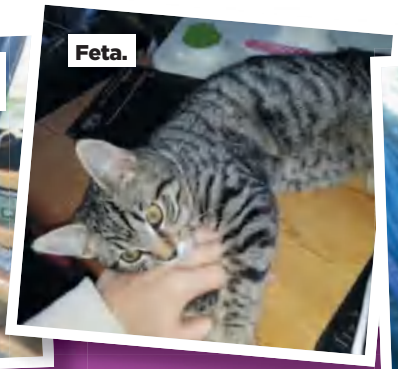
He turned out to be ginger and white, not black and white, and it wasn't until he'd been with me for a couple of days that I discovered there had been a mix-up. Dave was, in fact, Dozy. Either way, he was adorable and far from the hissing mass of fur I was warned many feral kittens are.

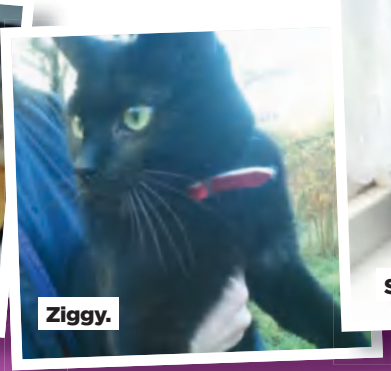
By the end of his first day, he was on my lap with his little white belly in the air. By day two, his cheeky personality had emerged. He would tap me with his little paw and then run away, or peep around a corner and then hide. He was extremely playful and would chirrup to get my attention.

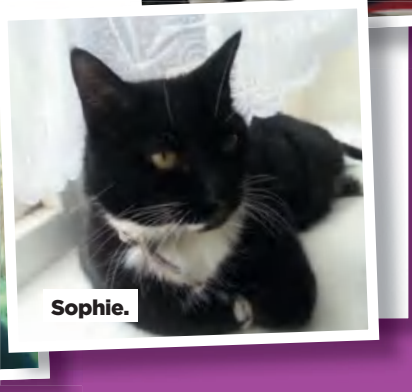
Dozy wasn't with me for long, but he certainly left his mark and I know he'll make his new family very happy.

I'm not fostering at the moment, but have no doubt I will in the future. There is so much to give and so much to gain. I can't recommend it highly enough! ■


Feta and Little Dorrit.


Feta.


Ziggy.


Sophie.

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Paw print gloves

Knit our paw print fingerless gloves and keep your hands snug this winter!

Craft



YOU WILL NEED

- ☐ 3.75mm knitting needles
- ☐ Double knit wool
- ☐ Felt for paw pads
- ☐ Sewing needle and thread

One size to fit woman's average size hand.
Length approx: 18cm.

DIRECTIONS

Cast on 40 stitches.

STEP 1

Row 1 (right side): (Knit 1, Purl 1) repeat to end of row.
Row 2: Repeat row 1.
This forms the ribbing edge.

Repeat last two rows four times, 10 rib rows in total.

STEP 2

Work 30 rows in stocking stitch (right side knit, wrong side purl).

STEP 3

Repeat step 1 for another 10 rib rows.

Cast off loosely in rib.

FINISH

Weave in all loose ends. Sew side seams leaving opening for thumb on one side, roughly 10 rows up and 10 rows down the stocking stitch section of the gloves.

PAW PRINT

Using the template, cut out a felt paw, then either stitch or glue in position.



PAW PRINT TEMPLATE (download online at www.yourcat.co.uk/cat-craft)



KNITTING DIFFERENT SIZES?

To make the gloves smaller (for children), cast on 30 stitches, rib 8 rows and stocking stitch 20 rows. For a larger size (for men), cast on 45 stitches, rib 12 rows and stocking stitch 36 rows.

With thanks to Marisa Bailey for this fabulous design!

Photos: Graham Warren

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CELEBRITY INTERVIEW

"I will always stop and talk to any cat I pass on the street!"



Businesswoman Margaret Mountford has loved cats all her life, and now has her hands full with Teddy and Pebbles from The Mayhew, writes Jill Eckersley.

"It's nice to have something small and furry in your house. And cats can also be really funny, can't they?" says businesswoman, lawyer and star of popular TV series 'The Apprentice', Margaret Mountford.

Margaret's current cats are a brother-and-sister pair from The Mayhew Animal Home in West London, who have been living with her for nine years — but she has been a cat lover all her life.

"I grew up in Northern Ireland where my father was a clergyman," she says. "He didn't like animals but my mother did, and we had a big beautiful tabby called Pussy, as well as a dog. I think it's good for children to grow up with animals as I did.


Pebbles.

Teddy.

"Pussy would stay out all night and certainly left his mark on the local cat population! When we went on holiday, Pussy would stay in the garden and our local milkman would give him milk and a tin of cat food every day. When we came home, there would be a pile of dead animals outside our back door — he was a great hunter too.

"We had to have him put to sleep when he was old and lost the use of his legs, and not long afterwards, a little black and white cat followed us home from the local golf course and stayed for 20 years. We called her Pussy, too!"

After leaving home, Margaret waited until she had her own house before acquiring another cat. "That was Freddy and he was a birthday present," she remembers. "We went to a rescue centre and he was banging on the window of his little pen as if to say 'Me! Me! Me!', so of course I had to have him. He was very curious — on his first day at home, he climbed up the chimney and came down covered in soot."

Freddy also lived into his teens. Margaret knew The Mayhew was her local rescue centre, so went there for her next cats.

"They happened to have a six-month-old brother and sister available, and I wanted two, so we were a good match," she says. "Although they are littermates, they aren't much alike. Teddy is a perfect tabby with a white front and paws. Pebbles has a longer white coat with tabby blotches and sheds fur everywhere. I always say he got the looks and she got the personality! He eats and sleeps, while she hunts and then lets him take the prizes away from her.

"Pebbles is the friendlier of the two, she will jump up beside me; Teddy only winds around my legs when he wants feeding. They love a bit of leftover steak as a treat."

Margaret says she would always choose a rescue moggy over a pedigree.

"Somehow, moggies like the ones I was brought up with seem like proper cats to me," she says. "I will always stop and talk to any cat I pass on the street. I don't like the idea of an indoor cat — I believe they need their freedom; they are independent creatures. Mine have a cat flap so they can come and go as they please.

"SOMEHOW, MOGGIES LIKE THE ONES I WAS BROUGHT UP WITH SEEM LIKE PROPER CATS TO ME."

"I have a holiday home on the island of Gozo and there are three semi-feral cats which live in the garden there. They get their three meals a day and one will even let you stroke him.

"The British and the Americans are known to be animal lovers but I think the message of kindness to animals is beginning to spread abroad too. They are looked after and fed, and neutered so they don't keep having kittens. It's sad that there are still so many unwanted animals in the world and rescue centres like The Mayhew do a fantastic job." ■

MISSING CATS

Lost & found

If your cat goes missing, it's difficult to know where to start on the quest to get him home — but social enterprise CatAware may have the answer.

On September 11, 2012, Cara Dymond's much-loved cat Hazey went missing. Cara was on holiday in Miami at the time, having left her dad in charge of visiting and feeding the cats.

As Cara made plans to return home, her dad and neighbours set about searching for Hazey, putting up posters and checking the local area.

"Hazey was the most friendly, confident cat — the type of cat who had many friends and feeders in the area. She could have wandered off somewhere or even jumped into the back of a delivery van. Nothing would have surprised me," says Cara.

"I was desperate and so frightened for her. I contacted our local Cats Protection, who were very helpful and posted her picture on their website."

Cara continues: "I met so many lovely people when I was searching for Hazey; a lot of them called me after a week to see if I'd found her yet. It gave me the idea to create a network for the cat community. I wanted to talk to the sort of people who noticed cats.

"What I wanted was a way to broadcast to everyone that Hazey was a missing cat, so they could keep an eye out for her in their back gardens and in the area."

Six months later, Cara launched her online cat community, CatAware, at the National Pet Show 2013.

Cat-loving network

CatAware has grown substantially since its launch. With almost 8,000 members, known as CatAware friends, on its website and closing in on 20,000 Facebook fans, word is spreading on the network that connects cat lovers.

When we spoke to Cara, 7,094 cats had been registered on the website: 4,364 missing cats, 306 found strays, and 2,424 pre-registered cats (kitties whose details have been entered by their owners as a precaution).

There's still a way to go before CatAware becomes the solid, nationwide network that Cara envisions — it's clear there are many more owners (and missing cats) that could benefit from the mutual aid offered by the community.

So how does it work? When you sign up for free as a CatAware friend, you'll receive real-time email alerts whenever a cat within a two-mile radius is reported as missing on the website. When you've got the cat's details, you can keep your

Cats can go missing for a number of reasons.



Missing Hazey.



Cara and Hazey.

eyes peeled for the feline fugitive and contact his owner if you spot him.

Cara explains: "CatAware is all about joining the people who have lost cats to the people in their area that would notice that cat if they saw him. It's about letting people know that the cat is actually missing.

"CatAware is about belonging to a large community of like-minded people and taking comfort from knowing people are looking out for your missing cat. Cat owners understand other cat owners and the bond that you can have with your cat."

Did you know?

An estimated 200,000 cats go missing every year in the UK.

As well as email alerts and newsletters, the enterprise also shares missing cat information on Facebook and Twitter. Cat owners can also take advantage of CatAware's practical services, including artwork templates for leaflets and posters that they can print out for their local area.

However, Cara adds: "After going through the experience of losing a cat and talking with other missing cat owners, I began to realise that CatAware is so much more than finding the cat. Its greatest service is to be able to support the owner, ease them through the searching or even grieving process, and help them by allowing other cat lovers to send messages of support."

Where did he go?

Unfortunately, many people believe their cat would never go missing, citing his personality or lifestyle as reasons why he wouldn't be 'the type' to wander away.

Cara cautions: "Any cat can go missing and there are lots of reasons why it might happen. House cats who aren't used to being outside may escape out of a window and then panic. You could move house and your cat could get outside too early and get lost.

"Cats can get shut in garages, sheds or empty houses. It's not the usual behaviour that causes a cat to leave or become missing. It's an unusual event, things we don't expect."

She adds: "There are often cat owner disputes as well, where a cat may have chosen to have several different homes. One person may move away with the cat and the other person knows nothing about it. Unneutered males are prone to wandering too — they're not guided by location; they're guided by the ladies!"

If your cat goes missing, notify as many people as you can, including microchip companies, vets, local charities and your neighbours. Share posters and pictures in your local area. Your council may also keep details on animal bodies found in the area, so it's worth checking in case your kitty has sadly been in an accident.

Cara advises: "Make sure you put it all over social media — you'll be surprised to see who cares! Ask people to physically go out and look for your cat as well.

"I've known people who give up after five days, thinking their cat is lost forever, but that's really not very long at all. Your cat can survive on his own for far longer than that, so don't despair if he isn't found straight away."

Your best bet for locating a missing cat is to make sure that he is microchipped before he even thinks about going wandering! CatAware works closely with microchip database company Petlog, and the two organisations believe that only a mere 15 per cent of cats in the UK are microchipped.

"Vets have told us that a lot of cat owners don't microchip their pets because they think cats are more independent and don't need it. They also don't understand that they need to update microchip details when they move house, for example — those details aren't kept with your vet; they're kept with the database companies."

Unfortunately, despite being microchipped, Cara's cat Hazey is yet to be found — but she hasn't given up hope, instead praising CatAware's evolution into a support network for distraught owners.

Cara explains: "It's not just about finding the cat; it's about supporting the owner as well. They feel awful when their cat goes missing. We all know that we can see our cats as children, and to lose them is a terrible situation."

She adds: "In many ways, missing a cat is worse than a cat dying. I don't think we get over it really — the not-knowing is the most awful thing. We have no closure; we still look out for our missing cats, many years after they've disappeared.

"CatAware is about letting those owners know that people do care about them and their cat. It has turned into a support network. I wanted to do something good for cat owners because I needed it after Hazey, and I think I've managed to do that." ■

"It's not just about finding the cat; it's about supporting the owner as well."

Become a CatAware friend

If you want to help reunite owners with their missing cats, or you need help finding your own missing kitty, sign up to become a CatAware friend.

Fill in your details at www.cataware.co.uk/yourcat to start receiving email alerts about missing cats in your area.

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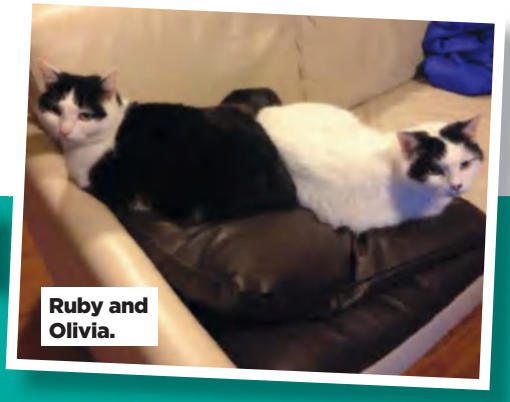
SPECIAL FEATURE

Home or away?

You're going on holiday or for a weekend away — is it best to leave your beloved cats at home with a trusted pet sitter, or take them to a cattery? Melanie Whitehouse reports.

As doting owners, we always want the best for our cats, and that includes making arrangements for their care when we go on holiday. But is it best to leave them in the comfort of their own home with a responsible pet sitter, or take them to a trusted cattery? It's often down to the cat's individual wants and needs — and the owner's — as these readers explain.

"The girls are so much happier with a pet sitter..."



Ruby and Olivia.

Sharon Hutchison lives in Edinburgh with her shorthaired rescue moggies, 14-year-old Olivia and 12-year-old Ruby.

"I'd always used catteries in the past and found them fine, in that cattery staff always seem to love the animals. But there were definite drawbacks, like having to pay for an extra day at either end of a holiday to allow for flights.

"Another downside was the journey to the cattery, because taking the girls anywhere in their carriers is always fraught with angst — on their part and mine. Catteries tend to be in the middle of nowhere and having two cats yowling from the back seat for 30 minutes is no fun. The cats were always a bit distant for a day or two after coming home too — they can really hold a grudge!

"I'd toyed with the idea of using a pet sitter before but wasn't sure about how secure it was. In 2012, I met Moyra and she mentioned she worked for Animals at Home. I could tell it was a business she took seriously and the fact she'd had training from a vet was very reassuring.

"I asked her to come round to meet Ruby and Olivia and they took to her straight away, even though Ruby can be very nervous of strangers.



Sharon and Ruby.

"When I'm away, Moyra always sends me text messages to let me know the girls are fine. A side benefit is that I also know the flat is secure and being checked every day. That is definitely a service not provided by a cattery!

"I normally use Moyra around four times a year for holidays or weekends away, and my brother now uses her to look after his chinchilla. Having a pet sitter eliminates all the downsides of a cattery — I only pay for the days I need to, for instance.

"I tend to have her come the day after I head off until the day before I arrive home, so for each trip I save four days'

"I felt they'd had a good holiday!"



Leo enjoyed his time at the cattery.



Jean Barton lives in Hassocks, West Sussex, with her six Oriental cats, Thomas, Ziggy, Casper, Sophie, Leo and Monty, aged one to 19 years.

"In June 2013, my sitting room floor collapsed. It turned out there was a water leak in the street, which, over a long time, had undermined my wooden floor.

"I had to clear everything out of the room and I had builders in to fix the leak and concrete over the floor, and that meant I had to find a home — fast — for my six cats. There was nowhere for them to go while the work was being done, and it was too dangerous for them to stay. I sent them to Mialee Blair at the Balneath Wood Cat Hotel in East Sussex. I knew they'd be safe there because Mialee is a vet and had looked after my cats when she had a practice in Hassocks.

"A neighbour drove us all to the cattery, which is in a beautiful place in the middle of the Sussex countryside where the cats are really pampered. I'd never left my cats before and I felt really bad about it, but the first thing Sophie did was climb up a ladder. She didn't mind being left at all!

"Mialee rang me regularly with updates and, with my permission, she put their pictures up on her Facebook page so I could see what they were getting up to.

"Because the females don't get on, they were in two rooms — three in each — all of which were beautifully decorated with beds and duvets, climbing posts and toys. They were really spoilt but it was worth it to have peace of mind. And because I didn't have a car, Mialee even delivered all six back to me at the end of their stay.

"They ended up staying for 10 days, which cost me a small fortune, but when they came home I felt they'd had a really good holiday. I popped out for a few minutes and the first thing they did was turn on the kitchen taps. I came home to find my newly-concreted floor flooded!"

Suites at Balneath Wood Boutique Cat Hotel in South Chailey, East Sussex, start at £14.50 for one cat. Visit **www.balneathwood.co.uk** or tel. **01273 610399**.

"CATS ARE THE ULTIMATE, INDEPENDENT HOME-BODIES, BUT GIVEN TIME WILL ADAPT TO ANY ENVIRONMENT."

fees. The fees themselves are less than what I'd pay at the cattery, so for most trips the overall cost is less than half of what I used to pay.

"However, by far the biggest benefit has been how happy the girls are. I sometimes wonder if they even realise I've been away!

"They get to stay in their own environment, and Moyra comes in and makes a fuss of them, feeds them and makes sure everything is ok.

"Even if Moyra was more expensive than the cattery, I wouldn't go back because the girls are markedly happier now."

To find a pet sitter in your area, contact Animals At Home on tel. **08701 126613** or visit **www.animalsathome.co.uk** Prices start from £45 per day.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Get recommendations from friends or your vet and always check out both catteries and pet sitters yourself.

If you choose a cattery, British Catteries recommends making sure the building is clean and that each cat has a separate, enclosed sleeping area with his own exercise run. It should also have adequate ventilation between the units. Cats should not come into contact with each other and should be boarded alone if they're not brought in together. There should also be plenty of toys and places to snooze. Sleeping areas should be insulated, fully enclosed and individual. It's also advisable to check that other cats being boarded are in good health.

If choosing a pet sitter, Animal Friends pet insurance advises inviting them to your house first to meet your animals. You should check they are trained in animal care and behaviour, and CRB-checked.

Ask them for references (and check them), and ensure they have specialist insurance that covers both your animals and your home. Provide them with a written list of your cat's needs and exercise regime, as well as your number while you're away and your vet's details.

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY

Isle of Wight vet Tim Watson says many cats would remain more relaxed at home, as long as they are visited twice daily and left with mentally challenging toys. He believes that leaving cats in a smaller environment with other cats within sight and earshot can be stressful, given the solitary nature of the species.

Animal hospice vet Susan Gregersen says cats are the ultimate, independent home-bodies, but given time will adapt to any environment. However, she adds: "I would advise against putting an ill or elderly cat in a cattery, as the experience maybe deeply stressful and even traumatic." ■

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Ruby before.


Ruby after.

Feline fit

Now in its tenth year, PDSA's Pet Fit Club continues to tackle obesity in our beloved animals.

Kayla before.

Kayla after.

The results are in and the biggest losers in PDSA's Pet Fit Club have been announced. The competition saw a total of 73kg lost by its 15 finalists — an aptly large amount to mark its 10th anniversary.

The overall winner was seven-year-old Kayla, a Bullmastiff (previously Bullmassive!) who lost an incredible 17kg after entering Pet Fit Club at a dangerous 59.4kg. Her owner admitted to being at fault — having made double portions of every meal she ate, so her pooch was enjoying Sunday roasts, pizza and even bowls of cereal for breakfast!

PDSA vet Vicki Larkham-Jones explains how Pet Fit Club came about: "It's a longstanding campaign. We identified through our hospitals, PAW Reports and other sources that obesity in pets was and is on the rise.

"There are no trends in pet obesity. It affects all pets, all over the country. Research indicates that a quarter of cats are overweight or obese, and this rises to a third in dogs."

After a public appeal to find contestants, 15 finalists are selected to take part in Pet Fit Club, comprising a six-month programme of diet and exercise to slim down the podgy pusses and pooches.

Throughout the competition, the pets have monthly check-ups and weigh-ins, supervised by PDSA vets and nurses. The winner is announced based on what percentage of overall body weight has been lost. This year, Kayla worked off 28.5 per cent before being named slimmer of the year!

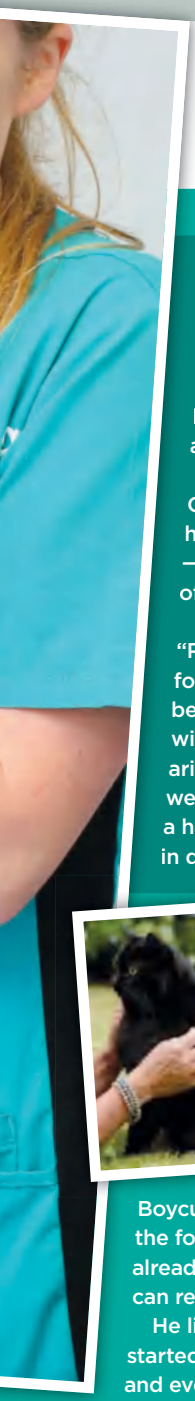
Vicki comments: "Kayla's transformation on Pet Fit Club is amazing. Her success proves it's never too late to make positive changes to improve our pet's health and wellbeing. All of this year's Pet Fit Club slimmers are enjoying a better quality of life, thanks to their weight loss."

She adds that if you're concerned about your pet's weight, speak to your vet, who will be able to help get him on track to a happier, healthier life.

"PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS MAY BE A LITTLE SKEWED AND SEEING YOUR PET AND DECIDING IF HE'S OVERWEIGHT IS SOMETIMES DIFFICULT."

FAT CATS NO MORE!

It wasn't just the dogs who did well — the latest Pet Fit Club finalists included the following formerly fat cats:







Ruby was in desperate need of Pet Fit Club, joining at a hefty 7.9kg. She's always been a yo-yo dieter and, in the past, did lose quite a bit of weight — but the pounds piled back on, as she refused to exercise.

She finished top cat in Pet Fit Club after losing nearly a fifth of her body weight to reach 6.5kg — well on the way to her target of 4.5kg.

Her owner Lucy Caton says: "Ruby is always going to be very food-motivated but she no longer begs for food. However, she will still steal if the opportunity arises — the day after her final weigh-in, she got her paws on a ham and cheese sandwich, as if in defiance!"

Cat food burglar Pippa was partial to pinching her companion's food after finishing her own dinner. It wasn't until owner Audrey Brooks' friend pointed out Pippa's weight — which had ballooned to 6.9kg — that she decided to do something about it.

Audrey says: "Pippa has a terrible habit of eating our other cat's food, so I've had to supervise them at meal times. She's an indoor cat because we live on a busy road, so we've brought chasing toys, which she loves, and encourage her to run up and down the stairs to get her moving."

All Sim wanted to do was eat, eat, eat! His owner Robert Burden says Sim always tried to wolf down his other cat's food and cried constantly until he got his own way. Robert suspects that Sim also scavenged, until he was so big that he couldn't get on the sofa. He joined Pet Fit Club at 7.4kg. Thankfully, he has dropped to 6.4kg, less than 2kg away from his target weight of 4.7kg.

Robert comments: "He is much more agile and runs up the stairs rather than crawling up them. Pet Fit Club has been the kick-start we needed, and the help and guidance from PDSA has been brilliant."









Boycus certainly has a way to go, but the former 9.9kg podgy moggy has already dropped to 9.25kg — and you can really see the difference.

He lives in a multi-pet household and started eating the other cats' dinners and even the dog's food. His owner Sam Denning tried everything to stop him stealing — even putting food inside cat carriers that were too small for Boycus's mammoth frame, but he always found a way to break in.

Since losing the weight, Boycus's blood sugar has dropped by 28 per cent and is now in normal range. Sam comments: "Pet Fit Club has completely changed how we think about feeding our cats — we weigh everything out now and the cats are all fed separately around the house."

KEEP YOUR CAT TRIM

To help your cat lose weight, Vicki suggests making sure that he's not getting extra food from anywhere else. She says: "You could be keeping him on a strict diet and then, when you let him out for exercise, he'll nip across the road for a five-course meal!

"The best way to get around this is talk to your neighbours, or you could even get him a collar that specifically states: 'Please don't feed me'."

Vicki asserts that, as well as controlling food intake, exercise is key when you're helping your pet to lose the pounds. She says: "A big part of weight loss is getting your pets to be more active. This actually makes it slightly trickier to get cats to lose weight."

A great way to encourage your cat to keep moving is through a variety of toys, which, Vicki states, don't have to be expensive.

"My cat goes mad for rolled-up balls of paper. She'll play with them for hours!" she smiles. "If you get annoyed by finding lost toys under the furniture or when you're vacuuming, a great tip is get a big cardboard box and put a few toys in there with your cat.

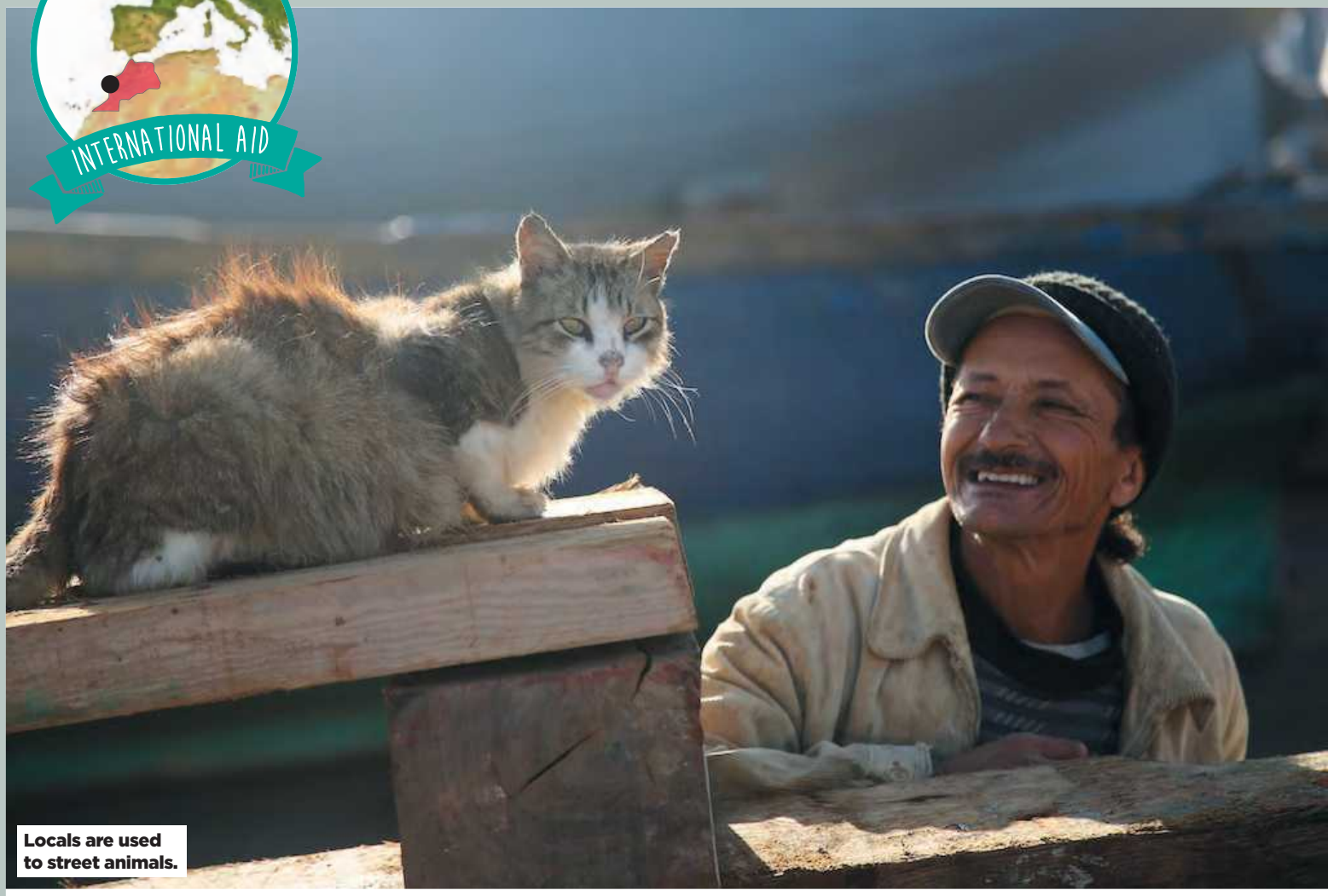
"My cat absolutely loves it because the toys bounce off the side as she bats them. It keeps her entertained as well as helping to keep the calories off."

Vicki also suggests placing food bowls around the house and using interactive or puzzle feeders to encourage your cat to work for his meals. She adds: "Scratch posts are important for keeping your cat's claws nice and trim; just make sure there are lots of different levels so he can do lots of jumping."

There are plenty of ways you can help your cat to lose weight and your local vet will be able to help you arrange a programme to keep on top of it. However, Vicki says: "People's perceptions may be a little skewed and seeing your pet and deciding if he's overweight is sometimes difficult." ■

Did you know?

One of Pet Fit Club's heaviest feline entrants was crisp addict Mini-moo, who at 9.7kg was almost twice her ideal weight!



Locals are used to street animals.

Gone with the wind

Morocco's 'Wind City' Essaouira is teeming with stray cats, but one charity is dedicated to keeping the population healthy and under control.



An equally popular spot for both romantic weekenders and thrill-seeking surfers, any visitor to windswept Essaouira on the Atlantic coast of Morocco is bound to comment on the abundance of homeless animals on its meandering streets.

Creeping around the deteriorating fortifications of the walled medina or seeking shelter in the bustling fishing harbour, it's hard to miss the cats that call this city home.

However, it's not just the plentiful supply of fresh fish that keep these felines happy — much of it is down to the committed care of Help the Street Animals of Morocco, better known as HSAM, a charity founded by a British couple 10 years ago following a heartbreaking holiday to the African destination.

Claire Sedgwick, a registered veterinary nurse, and her partner Rob White went to Essaouira in 2006 and witnessed first-hand the shocking number of poorly animals, mainly kittens, living on its streets.

"We actually looked after some kittens while we were there," explains Claire. "We even made sure that we tracked down the local vets to continue their care — which ended up being quite tough seeing as we didn't speak a word of Arabic!

"As soon as we got home, we started planning our next trip to go and help the animals again. I just couldn't stop thinking about them."

She continues: "The cat population in Essaouira is massive — you couldn't put a number on it but it's definitely in the thousands. Before we came along, none of them were receiving treatment."

Thankfully, that's all changed since Claire and Rob took the first HSAM group trip to the city with the intention of implementing a neutering


Essaouira has thousands of street animals.

programme — more than 100 cats were neutered on that 2007 trip alone.

A DIFFERENT APPROACH

The charity's work wouldn't be possible without the support of the Essaourian populace. One local vet in particular, Dr Adnan El Aji, stands out from the crowd for his unerring assistance to HSAM's cause: since the beginning, he has lent both his veterinary surgery and services to help the city's stray animals.

Now taking two trips to Morocco annually, HSAM carries out neutering, vaccinations, parasite control and other treatments as needed, using equipment and supplies from the UK. Interestingly, only necessary or severe cases are transferred to the vet surgery in the medina.

Claire explains: "We try to treat as many animals as we can on the street. If we took them all in, there would be far too many of them in one place — we'd be risking cross-contamination of nasty conditions and the animals would get very stressed."

It's not just on-the-spot treatment that gives HSAM its edge — what makes a real difference is the charity's goal to keep the street animals physically on the streets.

She says: "Traditionally, other charities will try to rehome animals. Our goal is to maintain a healthy street animal population — the animals are always released back onto the street whenever they're healthy enough to do so.

"There will always be street animals in Essaouira, so it's better — and makes more sense — to make sure they're healthy and unrestricted. There's no pet industry; people are only used to street animals. They become part of the community and we want to keep it that way."

Cats are not the only animals on HSAM's patient list. In 2013, the charity introduced the first dog neutering and rabies vaccination programme in Morocco, and the latest trip last October even aided a falcon! That trip also resulted in the neutering of 61 cats and parasite control for 59, whilst an incredible 141 kittens were treated. In total, the number of street animals cared for on HSAM's latest excursion reached 314.

"We have two teams that go out on opposite sides of the medina," says Claire. "We use purple spray on the cats that have been vaccinated so they don't get accidentally overdosed."

As well as the spray, neutered cats are identified by clipped ears and HSAM-treated dogs sport blue ear tags.

She adds: "There is a healthier population now. On our October trip, we had only five really poorly kittens. All the others we came across were treatable on the spot, so that's a really good result for us."

"THERE WILL ALWAYS BE STREET ANIMALS IN ESSAOUIRA, SO IT'S BETTER — AND MAKES MORE SENSE — TO MAKE SURE THAT THOSE ANIMALS ARE HEALTHY AND UNRESTRICTED."

Did you know?
HSAM has helped 3,745 animals in Essaouira since its first outing in 2007.


Cats are treated on the streets.

Essaouira in Morocco.



The last trip treated 141 kittens.

EDUCATION IS KEY

Claire knows how important it is for Essaouira's human residents to understand HSAM's vision. Although locals leave scraps of food and bed-worthy cardboard boxes out for their four-legged friends, she believes more can be done to help the multiple species live in harmony.

She explains: "What we do is fantastic for the animals but, without educating people, we're only doing half a job."

As well as handing out multilingual leaflets detailing various conditions and talking to locals about how they can help, the charity has recently introduced community events to further bolster its efforts.

October's trip included a Co-Existence event, where local schoolchildren joined the charity for a day to learn about street animals and their behaviour.

"It's about keeping them and the animals safe," smiles Claire. "The kids loved it! It was hard for them to go home; they didn't want to leave. This was the first event of its type and we'll definitely be doing things like that again."

Another trip to Essaouira is being planned for this spring and HSAM is busy preparing. Claire continues: "We rely solely on public generosity so we need donations to keep going. We also have an Amazon Wish List so our supporters can see what we need to help the animals. Of course, we're always grateful for any fundraising events or shout-outs on social media too!

"We're hoping for more support so we can help even more animals. Once we're happy with the street animal population in the medina, we plan to expand the area we work in. We'll stay in Essaouira though — those animals will always need help." ■



The Co-Existence event.



All cats are neutered and vaccinated.

CASE STUDY Wonky-Eye Ginger

Lieve van Eyken has been a volunteer with HSAM for almost two years. She says: "I first met Wonky-Eye Ginger in May 2014. The day I arrived in Essaouira, I chatted to two ladies in a cafe. When they heard the reason for my stay, they told me about Wonky-Eye Ginger.

"They wanted to help him but didn't know how. They made me promise to check on him, and I kept my promise!

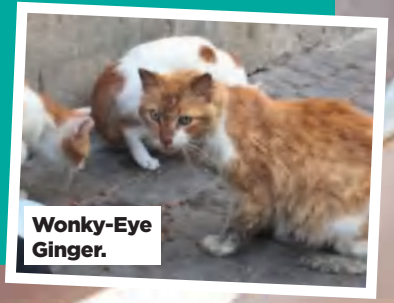
"It took me a day to locate him. That evening, there he was: dirty, sick, wonky-eyed, and living in his street along with several other cats. He was so sweet.

"The next morning, I found out he'd already been treated by two other volunteers, Pam and Sole. We took him to the surgery. He was so poorly that the vets kept him in for a day and a half before neutering him.

"After being neutered, he went home. The locals were so glad because they all love him — he's the symbol of their street!

"Since I always keep a promise, I checked on him first when we went last October. He was still there, our Wonky-Eye Ginger, on his street with his friends. He's as sweet as ever, although still a little poorly as his illness is chronic. I passed every day to feed him and his friends. One morning, we caught four of them to be neutered!

"A week on from HSAM's trip, my husband and I went back to Essaouira and we passed Wonky-Eye Ginger's street. His friends had recovered well from sterilisation and Wonky was so pleased to see me again!"



Wonky-Eye Ginger.

How you can help

HSAM appreciate any donations of veterinary supplies or financial aid to help neuter and vaccinate Essaouira's street animal population. Readers can visit **www.hsam.org.uk/how-you-can-help** for more details, and for a link to the charity's Amazon Wish List, which features urgently needed equipment and supplies.



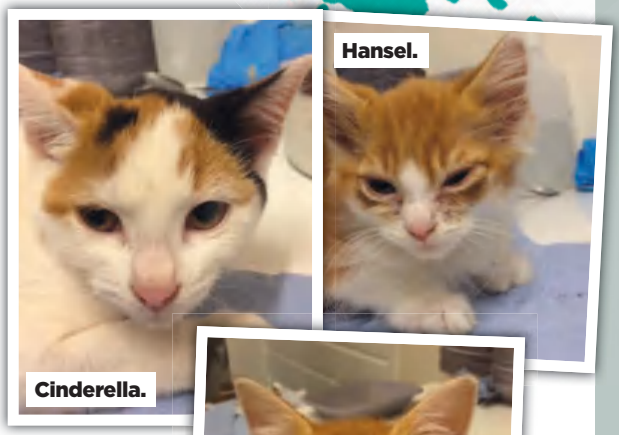
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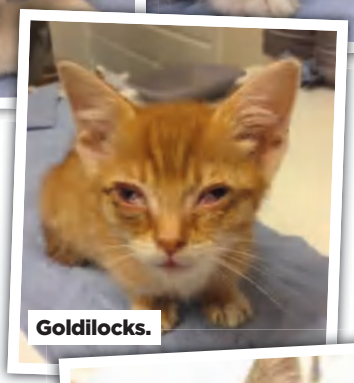
HSAM's volunteers are all experienced veterinary personnel and animal handlers.

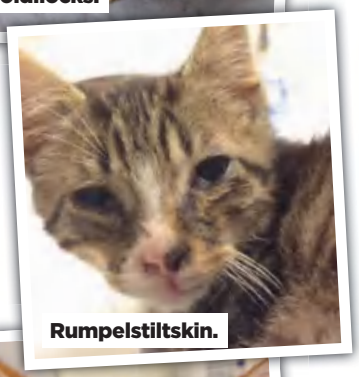
PART SIX

Diary of a rescue centre

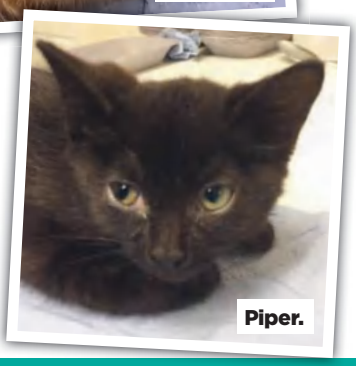
This month, Sara Atkinson and her team rescue 14 kittens in dire need of emergency flea treatment.











Fleas: pet owners despise them. The mere thought of them is enough to make us all itch. Luckily, preventing and treating a flea outbreak is usually simple and relatively inexpensive.

Even so, time and time again, we find ourselves holding tiny kittens, trying to remove their fleas before they succumb to anaemia. Sadly, this month proved particularly challenging for one little litter.

It was late afternoon when we took in 14 kittens aged from seven to 12 weeks from a multi-cat household in West Yorkshire. Clearly, this was another case of a mum and her older kittens being allowed to breed until the owner had become unable to cope. This happens a lot.

We called them the Fairytale Kits and they were named Piper, Cinderella, Guiseppe, Hansel, Goldilocks, Rumpelstiltskin, Rapunzel, Gretel, Aladdin, Pied, Octavius, Jack, Twinkle and tiny Thumbelina. They weren't in good shape but the most pressing issue was that they were crawling with fleas.


Thumbelina's flea-ridden stomach.

For young kittens especially, fleas can prove to be life-threatening. These guys didn't just carry a few; they were covered in hundreds of fleas — every single one.

We had to take action, and quickly. Their gums had gone from pink to pale: a sure sign of anaemia.

Spot-on flea treatment usually kills fleas after about 24 hours but we feared some of our group might not survive that long. Alternatively, you can use a spray-on solution which works faster but it has the downside of chilling the body as they get soaked. With poor immune systems and little energy to keep warm, this was a major concern. Let's not forget that flea treatment is essentially poison and can be deadly to young kittens if used incorrectly, so we always have to carefully weigh up the pros and cons.

As fast as we could, we began combing our new arrivals, which we felt was the fastest and safest way of alleviating them of their unwelcome guests. We sat in the kitten house for hours on end, trapping the fleas in a bucket of soapy water as we went along, stripping layer after layer of parasites from these tiny bodies.

It took us a full hour to rid each kitten of their burden. With 14 kittens in total, you can do the maths. It seemed to never end.

Despite constantly being bitten by fleas as their siblings waited for their turn to be treated, we noticed how they had given up scratching. They were too weak and the fleas were too many. It was heartbreaking but also made us more determined to see them through it.

It was clear that these kittens had been suffering for a long time. Their fur was brittle and dry, and their skin was bare in patches. As these pesky insects drain the blood, the body begins to direct whatever nutrition remains to the most vital organs. There is nothing left for keeping their fur shiny and soft.

We did our best. Even when we think a kitten has passed the point of no return, we never give up on them. You never know just how much fight these little beings have in them. Luckily, 13 survived and have since gone to their new homes — flea-free! Sadly, it was too late for Thumbelina. She was so anaemic from the flea bites that our efforts proved in vain.

I'd like to think that Thumbelina didn't die for nothing — and if this piece helps to highlight just how dangerous these bloodsucking insects can be, then she won't have done. It would be even better if her story encourages people to reach out to those who live with a large group of cats, and need help bringing them under control. ■

NEXT MONTH...

Sara continues with her monthly diary.

GOT A QUESTION?

Send your question to our experts via email to catcare@yourcat.co.uk or by post (see page 3 for our address).

MEET OUR EXPERTS



GENERAL CARE

CELIA HADDON is a well-known pet columnist and author of numerous cat books. She is a cat lover and owner, with a cat behaviour qualification and broad experience of feline issues.



NUTRITION

LIBBY SHERIDAN MVB MRCVS worked as a vet before joining the pet food industry. She then set up Mojo Consultancy, offering specialist business support to the pet care industry.



VETERINARY

NIKKI GAUT BVetMed MANZCVS (Feline Medicine) MRCVS is a feline practitioner at a cat-only clinic in London. Find out more about Nikki at www.nikkigaut.com



BEHAVIOUR

JON BOWEN BVetMed DipAS(CABC) MRCVS is a lecturer in small animal behaviour, with a particular interest in inter-cat aggression and abnormal behaviour.



HOLISTIC

HOLLY MASH BVSc IVAS MRCVS specialises in complementary medicine including herbalism and acupuncture. She also runs online courses for owners.



BEREAVEMENT

DR SUE DAWSON is a counselling psychologist specialising in human-companion animal relationships and pet bereavement.



GARDENING

GRAHAM STRONG is an award-winning garden writer, experienced plantsman and garden designer. He's also a cat owner and knows just what they like outdoors!



GROOMING

ANITA KELSEY MCBFA/CIDBT runs a vet referral practice dedicated to behaviour problems in cats. She is also an expert cat groomer. Visit www.catbehaviourist.com



Supervise your cat's eating habits.

Visit www.yourcat.co.uk/advice for tips on diets and obesity.

NUTRITION

HE'S GETTING BIGGER!

Q I look after two semi-feral cats on behalf of Cats Protection. They both have half a pouch of wet food and dry food, twice daily. As they both wander around, Spot has piled on a bit of weight. How can I get him to lose weight when I don't know what he has been eating?

LIBBY ADVISES:

A There are various different gadgets you can buy now that help limit food intake, such as timed feeders and even a bowl with access activated by an individual cat's microchip. These are ideal for multi-cat households and you can feed each cat accordingly to his specific needs.

To solve the problem of not knowing what he's eating, if you didn't want to go down the microchip feeder route, you will need to feed your cat separately and not allow unsupervised grazing. You may discover the cats are not overindulging and the weight gain is the result of restricted exercise, or you may indeed find that one cat has been eating far more than the other.

Once you know the answer to the question, you can then start to do something about it by combining separate feeding with exercise. It can be difficult exercising cats but not impossible. You can make him work for his food by placing his bowl in a different place each day so he has to move around to seek it out. It will also help to encourage him to play with toys. Mini light torches are great fun but in some cats might lead to frustration, as they never actually catch their 'prey'.

Make sure the food you are feeding is not too rich and fatty for a cat that is not living an energetic semi-feral lifestyle, and so not burning most of the calories. There are many 'light' diets to choose from. ■

BEREAVEMENT

DO PETS GO TO HEAVEN?

Q My 14-year-old cat passed away recently from cancer and I am just heartbroken. I miss him so very much. Do you think pets go to heaven? I can't imagine the thought of never seeing him again.

SUE ANSWERS:

A I am so sorry for your loss. It's understandable that losing someone who's been in your life for 14 years has generated such grief.

Different faiths provide possibilities for understanding where our spirits go, but ultimately I think it's impossible to say. I believe that, through our memories and love, the essence of those we've lost lingers over the rest of our lives. Grief theorists used to believe the purpose of grief was disconnecting from our relationship with deceased loved ones, but our understanding today has changed to recognise the continuing bonds.

Grief can be seen as an adjustment process involving emotional, spiritual, physical and social aspects, as we try to come to terms with a world without our loved one's physical presence. Searching for meaning is an important facet of grieving. Sometimes it's helpful to talk to others with similar experiences who can be there to listen non-judgementally. If you'd like to speak to someone, Blue Cross offers a confidential pet bereavement support service (tel. **0800 096 6606** or email **pbssmail@bluecross.org.uk**). You are in my thoughts at this difficult time. ■

VETERINARY

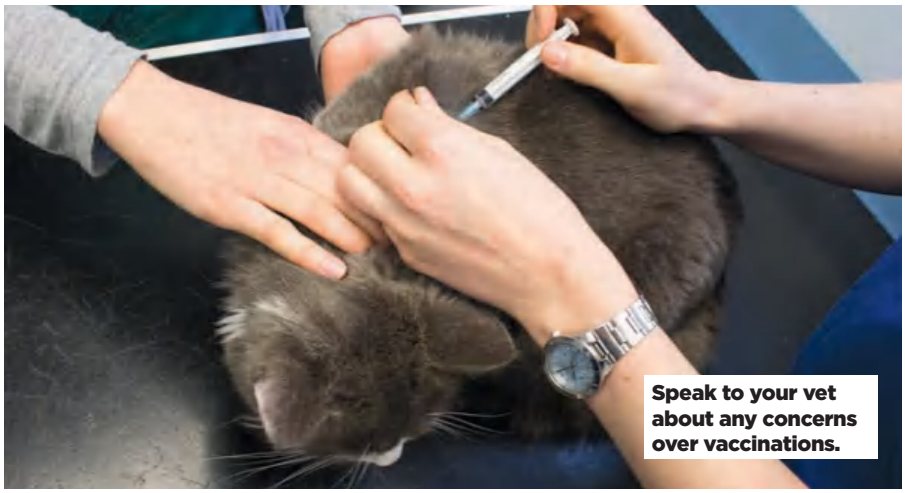
DOES MY INDOOR CAT NEED ANNUAL VACCINATIONS?

NIKKI SAYS:

A There is much debate over vaccinations in cats and the reality is that there is no 'one size fits all' approach. Routine vaccination has greatly reduced the extent of several feline diseases in the cat population, including some that can prove fatal, and organisations such as The Cat Group strongly recommend the routine vaccination of all cats. However, there has been recent scientific evidence to suggest that routine annual vaccination of cats against all diseases may not be necessary.

Immunity from vaccination probably does last longer than 12 months in most individuals, but this will vary between the diseases being vaccinated against, the vaccines being used and the individual cats themselves. The Associated Board of Cat Diseases (ABCD) advises that there are core and non-core vaccinations that every cat should be assessed for. Core vaccinations for indoor cats are comprised of Feline panleukopenia (FPV) or Infectious enteritis, a severe and often fatal gut infection spread by a virus widespread in the environment; and cat flu, which comprises Feline herpesvirus (FHV-1) and Feline calicivirus (FCV), for which vaccination will protect the cat against prolonged and severe illness. These viruses are still a risk to indoor cats as they are airborne, or easily carried inside on our shoes in the case of FPV.

Recent recommendations advise that all cats should have a primary course of core vaccinations at nine and 12 weeks as kittens (as well as any others agreed by your vet), followed by a booster at one year old. After that, the frequency of booster vaccinations may be only every one to three years, depending on a variety of factors. Cats that stay at a boarding cattery will generally require annual vaccinations as this is a higher risk situation. Therefore discussing this with your vet is probably the best way of tailoring a vaccination programme to your cat's needs. ■



Speak to your vet about any concerns over vaccinations.

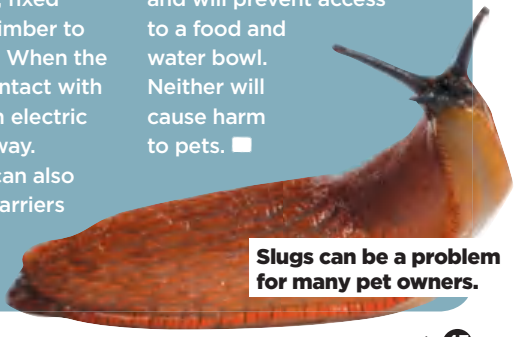
GARDENING

IS THERE A CAT-FRIENDLY SLUG REPELLENT?

GRAHAM SAYS:

A Many pet owners are keen to control slugs without harming their pets. Slugs are often attracted to any outdoor food or water bowls put down for pets. We have the same problem when feeding layers pellets to our hens. Once the slugs know where the feeder is, they will come each night to feast and contaminate the food with slime; they keep returning because slugs leave a chemical messenger in their slime trails which they can then follow to a food source.

You could use copper tape available on rolls specifically as a slug deterrent, fixed to an up-stand of timber to make a low barrier. When the slugs come into contact with copper, they get an electric shock and move away. Alternatively, you can also buy electric tape barriers that run off small voltage batteries and will prevent access to a food and water bowl. Neither will cause harm to pets. ■



Slugs can be a problem for many pet owners.

BEHAVIOUR SPECIAL

Nip it in the bud



Photo: Warren Photographic

Behaviourist Peter Neville sinks his teeth into his latest case: two kittens who won't stop biting and scratching their poor owners!

THE PROBLEM

TASHA MARTIN SAYS: "We have recently adopted two kittens from our local vet, who had a litter dropped off with him and was looking for homes quickly. They are beautiful but, my goodness, they are very sharp! We are being scratched and bitten to pieces! We know they only want to play with us but, at this rate, we are going to bleed to death before they make it to adulthood. Please help us."



Prego and Saatchi.

Tasha and her husband Justin, from Worthing, Sussex, had recently adopted two four-month-old female kittens called Prego and Saatchi, but they were in need of some prompt advice about educating their new additions to be social, well-behaved cats — as, although they were sweet, these kittens were attacking fingers and ankles!

When Tasha picked up the kittens from the vet, the couple immediately fell head over heels in love with them and the four quickly bonded. The girls slept in the couple's bed and since Tasha worked from home, they would spend most of their day playing around in the office with her, distracting her as only kittens can.

When I first met the kittens, they were full of life and very movement-orientated. I was followed around for a bit before Saatchi summarily climbed up my trouser leg to get a cuddle. Tasha pointed out that this was one of the problems.

One of her clients had encouraged Saatchi to climb up him using his jean-clad leg as a ladder, and since then, they couldn't get the kittens to stop doing it. They would attempt to climb anything, with or without trousers to grab on to! Justin showed me the scratches on his legs from the kittens' mountaineering attempts and they looked very painful.

Saatchi and Prego also liked to play 'catch' with ankles and fingers, and that was a main concern for the couple.

I explained that kittens need to be taught bite and claw inhibition, and they have to be shown what appropriate toys are and how to use them. The movement from hands and feet (not to mention almost everyone will automatically encourage a kitten to catch their fingers) tends to make these a very interesting target for investigating kittens.

Of course, at this age, the cats are also rehearsing their intrinsic predatory techniques — wiggling fingers and moving feet make perfect target practice!

STOP THE BITING!

In order to teach the two kittens not to hurt their owners, I suggested we started by teaching them bite inhibition. They needed to learn that humans have softer skin and no fur, so they need to soften and control their biting when dealing with us. Simply put, when the kittens bit during play, they needed to understand it meant the end of the game.

As long as the mouthing was soft or ideally lost from their interactions, Tasha and Justin could continue playing, reinforcing the calmness with a quiet: "Good, gently... Good kitten!". However, if the pressure became too hard, they had

OUR BEHAVIOUR EXPERT

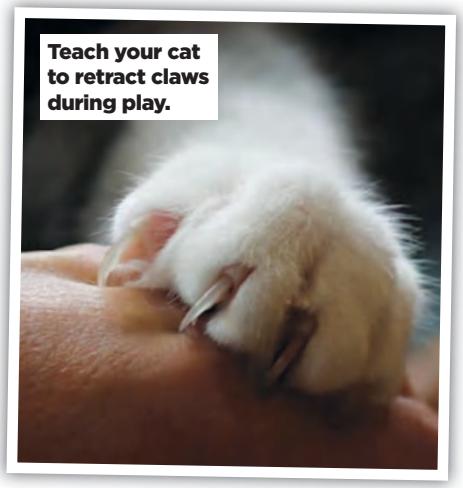


PETER NEVILLE is an expert in feline behaviour and works both in the UK and abroad. To find out more about Peter, go to **www.coape.org**

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to give a loud "Ow!" before immediately leaving the kittens alone. It's important not to squeal when you are bitten or scratched by kittens — you'll sound like a captured rodent and that only fuels the behaviour! A firm, loud "Ow!" is enough, and remember to stay calm if you want to encourage the same from the cats.

It's exactly the same approach we use when teaching puppies, and one that kittens normally experience in the litter between themselves and from their mum. Justin and Tasha had to continue, or perhaps start the process, as we weren't sure what experience their kittens had had in their earlier rearing environment.


Teach your cat to retract claws during play.

FEEDBACK DURING PLAY

Kittens also need to learn their claws can inflict painful damage when used on people. To teach Saatchi and Prego to keep claws retracted, the couple had to give feedback to the kittens on how they were to behave during play.

If at any stage during their interactions, the claws came out — even slightly — they had to use the same "Ow!" noise that was used in the bite inhibition exercises.

As noise and movement (for example, pulling your hand back or wriggling your fingers) could cause the kittens to pursue the game even more, I suggested Tasha and Justin let their hands go limp and use a toy to distract the cats before removing their hands.

When it came to ankle-pouncing, I explained that the kittens wanted to play and practise their chase-and-grab co-ordination. It's normal for kittens to learn the appropriate size of 'prey' to pounce on as they develop. Normally, prey would be mouse-sized and the cats would learn that humans are too big for them. We had to channel that enthusiasm into a different target without the owners punishing the cats, as that would affect their relationship with them.

If they saw the kittens getting ready to stalk or pounce, they could simply pick up one of the many toys lying around and use it to distract them away from their ankles and onto the toy. Cat toys need to move in order for them to be entertaining for cats, so having a ton of toys just lying around was not good enough. Until the kittens knew how to play with toys alone, they would have to be reminded and encouraged to focus on the toys instead.

I advised the couple to invest in a scratch post and a few interesting interactive wand- and fishing rod-style toys, as I could see that these two kittens were going to be busy adults who would need a lot of mental stimulation.

I also recommended introducing several food-dispensing toys and feeding stations with only a few kibbles in each bowl. This would encourage the kittens to search for food, keeping them happily occupied instead of frustrated or bored — which could lead to biting harder for fun.

To stop them from climbing up legs, I suggested to Tasha and Justin to firstly pre-empt the climbing by distracting the kittens. If they continued to climb, the couple should gently remove them and put them back on the floor, rolling a toy or ball of paper past them to divert their play.

If they showed any signs of finding their own way up onto laps or couches that didn't involve a trail of bleeding humans, they could reward the kittens with lots of love and some nice treats, as long as they stayed calm and relaxed.


Cats need to be taught bite and claw inhibition.



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PROBLEM SOLVED

Tasha emailed two weeks after my visit to give me some feedback: "Thank you for all the help, we have learnt so much! We now know how to play with Prego and Saatchi and the scratching, biting and leg-climbing have stopped. They are like two new characters! They've also become cuddlier and will groom us now, instead of constantly biting and scratching us, and reserve all their chase-and-grab behaviour for each other and their toys. I'm sure it's not only because of the fun they're having with us now, but also because we are no longer squealing all the time!" ■



Cats can stop eating for a variety of reasons.

NUTRITION & VETERINARY

MY ELDERLY CAT HAS GONE OFF HIS FOOD!

Q Over the last couple of weeks, my 11-year-old male neutered cat has started going off his food. We originally noticed his breathing was sounding funny and he developed a cough. We took him to the vets and they gave him a steroid injection and a course of antibiotics, which seemed to perk him up a little. However, once the antibiotics finished, he went off his food. He doesn't seem to want to do anything, apart from sleep. The cough and noisy breathing have gone but he still isn't eating normally. Any ideas?

NIKKI SAYS:

A I am sorry to hear that your cat is struggling with his appetite — this can be incredibly worrying for any owner and normally indicates a serious, underlying condition. Cats can stop eating for a variety of reasons — pain, difficulty breathing, nausea, lethargy, stress — and it is important that primary causes of these symptoms are sought, so I would urge you to seek veterinary attention again.

Cats can sometimes get secondary bacterial infections on top of other underlying conditions in the lungs, such as asthma or even cancer, so although his breathing is better, I would be concerned that his appetite has not returned once these symptoms improved. Having some more specific blood or urine tests can help to rule conditions which cause inappetance (such as pancreatitis) in or out. As the presenting signs were as serious as difficulty breathing and coughing, I would recommend some diagnostic imaging. Initially, chest radiographs would be indicated to assess the heart and lungs and, if there were then any suspicions with the heart, a cardiac ultrasound. If the problem was not evident from radiographs or ultrasound, endoscopy (known as bronchoscopy) into the airways would be the next step.

LIBBY SAYS:

A If you can, I would try to pick up some recovery-type food from your vet practice. Hill's® Prescription Diet® a/d is an energy-rich, high protein, high fat food, which is calorie-dense and designed to be used for pets that need a boost. It's very palatable. Try to feed small amounts at a time — warming the food for a few seconds in the microwave to body temperature (and stirring to make sure there are no hot air pockets) will help to develop its aroma, which will hopefully stimulate your cat to eat. You can try initially just feeding him off your fingers, letting him lick a little. If he's reluctant, try dabbing just a small amount on his nose or putting a little on his paw, which he'll have to lick off and can then get a taste for it. Keep persisting while giving lots of gentle strokes and encouragement. If you can encourage him to eat wet food, that will help with hydration. Offer fresh water frequently too. ■

GROOMING

SHOULD I CUT MY CAT'S LONG FUR?

Q We have a cat who has quite long fur and his underneath is long and easily mats, especially around his back legs. We brush him every day, but it doesn't stop knots forming. He goes into the field and gets all sorts on him which can get knotted — should I cut the fur?

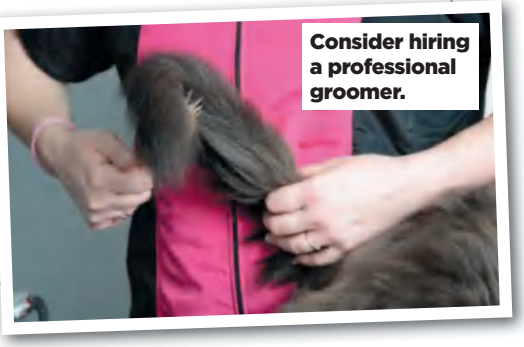
ANITA SAYS:

A If your cat goes out on a regular basis and always comes back with half of the woods in his fur, I suggest you consider hiring a professional groomer to give him a hygiene trim every couple of months, or when needed.

The hygiene trim usually involves shaving the fur around the nethers and lower belly, and trimming down on the back legs so you don't have to worry about the area getting matted. Hygiene trims are great for longhaired breeds. Some hygiene trims can extend to shaving all the fur on the tummy and under the armpits. These areas can be really difficult to manage so shaving them takes the worry away.

It's not a good idea to cut mats from a cat's fur because a cat's skin is like paper and you could easily cut it by mistake if the cat moves unexpectedly or if the mat is too close to the skin. If you do decide to use scissors to cut a mat out and it's not close to the skin, make sure you always slide a comb between the mat and the skin, and cut on top of the comb.

If you do decide to hire a professional cat groomer, look for one that works in a holistic way so your cat has a nice experience and doesn't mind the trims being regular. Good luck! ■



Consider hiring a professional groomer.

NUTRITION

WHY IS HE SCRATCHING?

Q I have a shorthaired rescue cat who spends a lot of time scratching, mainly around his eyes, base of his ears and his scruff area. The vet gave him a steroid injection, which certainly eased the problem, but he could offer no explanation as to why he was scratching so much. While the steroid did work, I don't really want to resort to this on a regular basis, as I have concerns about the side effects of steroid treatments. Could he be lacking in Omega 3?

LIBBY ADVISES:

A I would recommend speaking to your vet again and voicing your concerns about ongoing steroid treatment. He will want to know that the previous treatment only gave temporary relief and will make a plan with you for further investigation.

Itchy skin can be one of the most frustrating skin problems to get to the bottom of. There can be many reasons for it, and it's always best starting with the most common, at least to completely rule it out. Have a look at your flea control as this can be a very common cause for itchy skin. Unfortunately, animals that are flea-allergic only need to have one small bite from a flea and it can trigger lots of scratching, so ensure that your flea control is rigorous. You should treat monthly or at the recommended interval for the product you are using. Review the product you use, and I would recommend you use a flea product dispensed by your vet as these will be the most effective.

Whatever the root cause of his scratching, essential fatty acids (EFAs) such as Omega 3 can help. The EFAs help to improve the resilience of the skin, as well as having an inflammatory effect. There are many supplements on the market containing Omega 3s and Omega 6s. To ensure quality, I would look for one that is recommended or sold through your vet.

You can also buy food for sensitive skin that will have higher levels of EFAs in it. Again, look for a reputable manufacturer and a specially formulated food for sensitive skin rather than a regular food with added EFAs. The specially formulated food will contain additional beneficial nutrients to help skin healing. You'll be able to find food of this type through your vet or in specialist pet stores. Because of the length of time that it takes skin cells to renew, you'll need to feed the food or give the supplement for several months before being able to judge if it is having an effect. ■



Itchy skin can be one of the most frustrating skin problems.

HEALTH NEWS

VETS GIVE UP TIME FOR CHARITY

A survey has revealed that 84 per cent of vets give up their time to work with animal charities and shelters. British Veterinary Association president Sean Wensley says: "Behind these statistics are countless stories of veterinary teams — who already often work long, demanding hours — giving their time for free to support animal rescue staff and charities to care for abandoned, injured and neglected animals."

ANTIBIOTIC GUARDIANS

Public Health England (PHE), the Veterinary Medicines Directorate and leading pet awareness charity, The Bella Moss Foundation, have joined together to encourage animal lovers to join the fight against antibiotic resistance. Antibiotic resistance means the antibiotic has lost its ability to control or kill the bacteria. Whilst resistance is natural, the inappropriate and overuse of antibiotics can speed up the development of antibiotic resistance, which can be a big threat to our pets' health, and our own. PHE has launched an 'Antibiotic Guardian' campaign to encourage the public to pledge a personal action they will take to help combat antibiotic resistance. Visit www.antibioticguardian.com to get involved.

GUM BACTERIA REVEALED

WALTHAM Centre for Pet Nutrition, expert veterinary dentists and the Harvard-affiliated Forsyth Institute have used DNA technology to identify 267 bacterial species in feline dental plaque, and built a database with the differences between bacterial populations in healthy cats and those in cats with gum disease. Oral health researcher Dr Ian Davis says: "This is a first step in understanding the potential for improving oral health of cats through dietary interventions that target disease-associated bacteria."

GOT A QUESTION?

Send your question to our experts by post (see page 3 for our address) or via email to **catcare@yourcat.co.uk**

A VET'S VIEW

From the heart

Vet Dr Bradley Viner explores the heart conditions most commonly found in cats and kittens.

Cats can suffer from a wide variety of heart problems, from congenital deformations that may stunt the growth and cause breathing problems in young kittens, to defects in the electrical conductivity within the heart that can cause collapse in older cats. In some rare instances, cats are even fitted with pacemakers to correct this type of problem.

By far the most common heart condition in cats is a disease known as Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM), which affects the heart muscle itself.

DIAGNOSING FELINE CARDIAC DISEASE

Breathlessness, lethargy and an increased respiratory rate are usually the first problems noticed. Even if the condition has developed slowly, the

Photo: Warren Photographic

In kittens, a murmur may often be 'innocent'.

OUR EXPERT



VET DR BRADLEY VINER
BVetMed MSc(VetGP) DProf MRCVS is president of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and vice president of International Cat Care. He owns two cats adopted from Battersea Dogs & Cats Home, where he is a trustee.

signs can come on suddenly. This is because cats are very good at coping, masking the fact that they are unwell but then suddenly going downhill when their system simply cannot manage any longer. Sometimes the first sign that an owner notices is not one of heart disease itself, but of a complication due to high blood pressure, such as sudden blindness or paralysis of the hind limbs.

Clinical examination may well detect abnormalities, such as a 'gallop' sound (an extra heartbeat), and possibly the presence of fluid on the lungs. Other body systems may show signs relating to reduced blood flow from the heart.

Confirmation of a diagnosis of heart disease arrived at by a clinical examination will usually require a veterinary surgeon to carry out extra tests, which may include X-rays of the chest to show the outline of the heart, and an electrocardiogram (ECG) to measure the electrical activity of the heart. The most useful diagnostic tool of all is an ultrasound examination, as it can 'look inside' the soft tissues of the heart itself, to measure if the muscular walls are of normal thickness and to actually see them contract. The more sophisticated ultrasound machines are able to utilise what is known as Doppler technology, which shows the blood flow within the heart, with blood moving at different speeds showing up as different colours.

A blood test may be helpful, partly to check for any abnormalities in the cat's organ function or blood cells, but also to check the levels of a specific substance called NT-proBNP in the blood, which will be raised if heart failure is present. Blood or saliva can also be used to submit a sample for DNA analysis to check if the cat is carrying the gene that causes HCM.

For general health care advice, visit www.yourcat.co.uk/Cat-Advice/Cat-health-advice

HYPERTROPHIC CARDIOMYOPATHY

Excessive thickening of the heart muscle reduces the size of the chambers of the heart, and thus its ability to pump blood effectively. This can occur secondarily to other diseases that cause the heart to make more effort to pump blood over an extended period of time, or as a primary inherited condition.

"BY FAR THE MOST COMMON HEART CONDITION IN CATS IS A DISEASE KNOWN AS HYPERTROPHIC CARDIOMYOPATHY (HCM), WHICH AFFECTS THE HEART MUSCLE ITSELF."

The most common secondary cause of HCM is hyperthyroidism. The thyroid hormone controls the rate at which the body burns up energy, so a cat with an overactive thyroid is rather like a car with the accelerator pedal stuck down. He is voraciously hungry, yet loses weight, and often shows signs of hyperactivity. His heart also tends to pump much faster than normal, to try and supply oxygen to the tissues that are burning up energy at such a rapid rate, eventually causing the heart muscle to fail.

The inherited form of HCM is particularly common in several pedigree breeds of cat. In Ragdolls and Maine Coons, there are schemes to try and eradicate the condition using genetic testing of breeding stock, which will hopefully greatly reduce the incidence in future. British Shorthairs and Bengals are also prone to a hereditary form of HCM, but unfortunately there is currently no genetic test available for them. Breeders are encouraged to have their cats' hearts examined by ultrasound, but as the condition only shows up as the cat ages, the results are not as reliable. No doubt genetic testing will follow in the not-too-distant future, as this can pick up carriers of the condition as well as those affected.

TREATMENT OF CARDIOMYOPATHY

Acute cases of heart failure will need prompt treatment as a life-saving measure, particularly drugs to remove fluid from the chest, and sometimes oxygen therapy. It is even possible to drain fluid directly from the chest by placing a needle or catheter through the chest wall and using suction to draw it out, although the handling required can prove life-threatening for a very sick cat. Ongoing treatment may involve:

- The long-term use of a diuretic to remove excess fluid (most commonly frusemide)
- An ACE (angiotensin converting enzyme) inhibitor, which dilates the blood vessels to reduce the load on the heart and also helps reduce the build-up of fluid in the body
- Drugs called calcium channel blockers, which help the heart muscle relax to allow it to fill with blood more effectively and so pump more efficiently
- Beta-blockers, which are sometimes used to slow the heart rate down in cases where the heart rate is so fast that there is no time for the chambers to fill properly
- Low doses of drugs such as aspirin inhibit platelet function to reduce the chances of blood clotting and iliac thrombosis developing. It's important the dose rate and interval are followed, as such drugs can easily be toxic to cats
- In cats with persistently high blood pressure, a drug called amlodipine is used to reduce the blood pressure.

The long-term outlook for cats with most forms of cardiomyopathy is poor, but some cats can be given a worthwhile extra lease of life with supportive treatment. ■

MY CAT HAS A HEART MURMUR — SHOULD I WORRY?

A heart murmur may be heard by a vet with a stethoscope and is an abnormal noise caused by turbulent blood flow within the heart or the large vessels exiting the heart.

In kittens, a murmur may often be 'innocent' and not related to any structural heart defect, and, in the absence of any other clinical signs, may simply be something to be monitored to see if it changes, or if the cat has developed any clinical signs. If the cat is well and the heart murmur is unchanged, periodic examination may be recommended.

The most effective way to determine if there is any disease within the heart itself that may be causing the murmur is to perform an ultrasound examination of the heart. This is completely painless and is normally performed on a fully conscious cat. Some forms of congenital heart disease can be corrected surgically, but most frequently any associated heart failure has to be managed medically.



Pulling their hair out!



Over grooming is often down to skin irritation.

How can you tell if your cat is grooming too much? Virbac's technical advisor Blaise Scott-Morris MRCVS discusses the causes and symptoms of over grooming and hair loss.

You may have noticed that your cat grooms a lot. It's normal for cats to keep themselves clean. In fact, grooming can account for 30 to 50 per cent of their daily routine, alongside stalking birds, napping and eating. This can, however, make it hard to discern if your cat is grooming too much.

Over grooming is any grooming behaviour that goes beyond the normal amount needed for your cat's coat care and scent distribution. There can be many reasons why cats over groom, but also why their hair may fall out: hair loss or 'baldness' is known as alopecia.

Over grooming and alopecia can be linked. For example, your cat may be losing hair as a direct result of over grooming. True alopecia, however, is hair loss due to something other than over grooming. Of course, your cat might not have any hair naturally, like the Sphynx breed!

The reason over grooming can be damaging is due to cats' specialised, rough tongues, which have lots of backward-facing rigid spines, called papillae. The papillae act like a hair brush, allowing your cat to keep his coat shiny, beautiful and in tip-top condition through normal everyday grooming. When your cat is over grooming, his tongue can be destructive, causing damage to the fur and even the underlying skin.

Looking at the hairs can help your vet to distinguish true alopecia from alopecia due to over grooming. Under the microscope, your vet will see if the hairs have broken ends, indicating trauma from the tongue, or if hairs are normal and smooth. You can also feel this difference when you stroke your cat — the fur feels rough when damaged by your cat's tongue, or normal and smooth if it is falling out on its own.

Handy products

Synthetic feline facial pheromones can help in the control of stress-induced alopecia. They must be used in the right areas of the house so make sure you chat to your vet to identify where to use them.

Common causes of over grooming

The majority of cases of over grooming are initially caused by pain or irritation on or in the skin, such as:

PESKY PARASITES — Flea irritation (more specifically an allergy to their saliva), known as Flea allergic dermatitis, is a major cause of over grooming. The main areas your cat will over groom are the base of the tail, stomach and backs of his hind legs.

Other parasites such as mites, lice and ticks also cause irritation when they bite or attach to your cat. For this reason, among others, it's important to keep up to date with parasite control. For more flea advice, read part one of this Skin Series (in the November issue), or contact your vet. Other causes of skin irritation can include food or environmental allergies, skin infections, insect bites, fungal (read part two in the December issue) and yeast infections.

STRESS — Hair loss due to over grooming can also be triggered by stress,

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Virbac

known as 'psychogenic alopecia'. Stress can be either a common contributor or the sole cause of some cases. Cats use behaviours such as grooming to make themselves feel better when they are anxious or find a situation stressful.

Cats lead very organised lives, leaving markers in the form of pheromones on objects in their territory such as furniture, trees and even their favourite human! These pheromones help cats map out where they're happy and relaxed in their environment and where they should keep watch and be aware.

Cats are notorious for having 'stare-out' conflicts that do not lead to fighting, which makes it difficult to notice if your cat is in conflict with another. Cat-on-cat conflict tends to be a problem in multi-cat households and can often be linked to a struggle to reach important 'resources' such as food, water and litter trays. This can easily be overcome by having multiples of each resource at different points around the house — one for each cat, plus one extra.

Other examples of small changes that can be stressful to cats are new pieces of furniture, moving things around the house or garden, and new people or animals.

Did you know?

Cats' bodies are covered with up to 130,000 hairs per square inch!

PAIN — Commonly from arthritis or after surgery, pain can lead to over grooming of the affected area. Cats with arthritis will only be able to groom where they can reach so there may also be some areas on the body, such as along the spine, where the fur becomes matted and unkempt whilst other areas are becoming sparsely haired. This can be easily taken care of by regularly brushing the areas your cat cannot reach. Feline lower urinary tract disease can also cause discomfort and cats may groom the skin near the bladder as a result.

The bald truth

Alopecia can be something that your cat is born with — he may be born without any fur, or he may lose fur later in life. This can be due to a variety of causes, including dietary deficiencies, infectious diseases such as ringworm, or as a side effect of a problem elsewhere in the body.

If you notice your cat is shedding more hair than normal (you may find clumps of hair around the house) or even going bald in some patches, your vet can run a variety of tests to determine the underlying cause, such as taking a hair sample, some skin samples and even blood tests.

Symptoms and solutions

Although it can be hard to tell if your cat is over grooming, other signs from his skin and coat may indicate if there is a problem.

Keep an eye out for any visible parasites, such as mites, ticks, lice or fleas. With fleas, you may see the fleas themselves or 'flea dirt' — black sandy material produced by fleas. Secondly, you may be able to tell if there is a problem by how your cat's fur feels and looks — broken fur will feel rough, and fur may be sparse or may have disappeared completely in some areas. In some cases, there may be damage to the skin underneath, causing it to appear red, inflamed, or even scabby.

Depending upon the cause, the solution to your cat's over grooming and/or hair loss may be a simple one. Your vet can perform a range of tests, such as checking for parasites, skin irritation, pain or looking at a fur sample under a microscope to see whether there is any damage to the hairs themselves.

If the cause might be stress-related, your vet will try to identify the 'triggers' and may suggest some small changes in the home alongside pheromone therapy. ■



Photo: Warren Photographic

A cat with signs of hair loss.

Did you know?

Most cats hate water because their fur is not well insulated when wet.

NEXT MONTH...

Skin cancer and tumours.

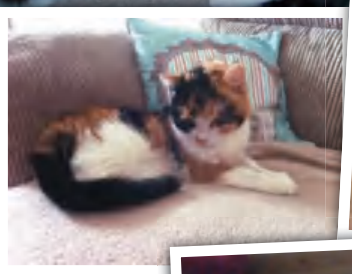
MY SPECIAL CAT

Against the odds

Blue Cross foster carer Sue Gurney is in awe of how her cat Tahlia handles life with Hydrocephalus.

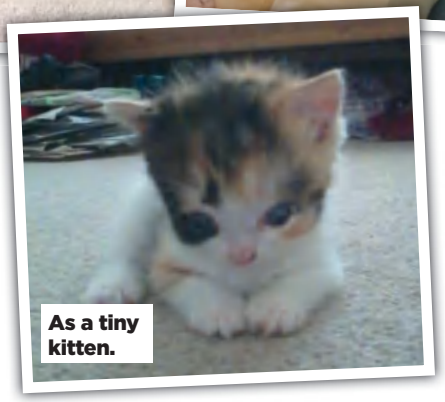


Tahlia loves her furry housemates!





Sue and Tahlia.



As a tiny kitten.

Tahlia came to me when she was just 10 days old. She was tiny and I fell in love with her at first sight. Within days, I found a lump on her head. The vet suspected it was a haematoma or a bruise, and said her skull had not yet fused.

At four weeks old, she began crawling. Although she was very small and quite wobbly, I knew that she would do things in her own time. Tahlia began walking and exploring more, playing with toys, negotiating objects and investigating things by licking them. She always enjoyed a cuddle, and everyone wanted to hold her.

During this time, she used the litter tray by herself. I heard her first purr, and saw her try to groom herself. Each tiny achievement filled me with such joy.

Tahlia's head was too big for her body, and her eyes set very low — it was about this time that she was diagnosed with Hydrocephalus. My heart ached when I was told she would have special needs for her short life span, but I promised myself I would do all I could and would enjoy her for as long as I had her.

We knew Tahlia could not be rehomed like her mum and sisters, so she joined my furry family.

Now she's one-and-a-half years old, and none of the things I had been told to look out for have happened. I read that in some cases of Hydrocephalus, the flow of spinal fluid into the brain can cease and this may be the case for Tahlia.

I am very proud of her; she's a real fighter. She lives a relatively normal life, although the brain damage has left her with problems. She can move about the house independently and, from an early age, she adapted her walking to compensate for her poor balance: she can't run but if she wants to move fast, she bounces!

"I AM VERY PROUD OF HER; SHE'S A REAL FIGHTER."

Tahlia's skull did eventually fuse, but her head movements are limited, affecting her peripheral vision. Her left eye does not close fully and she was prone to infections when she was younger. Her hearing, however, is excellent. Her head is very sensitive and she doesn't like noise — even normal talking voices startle her. She sometimes has a quiet day which could mean she has a headache.

She can play independently and is beginning to do this more now. She likes my other cats and is also very interested in my indoor rabbits, trying to pat them through the bars of their run!

Tahlia cannot groom her back, sides or tail so I use a cat comb to get the knots out. She only eats dry cat food and much of it goes over the edge of the bowl, but she perseveres.

Adopting Tahlia has been so rewarding. We have a close bond that I have never experienced before. She loves to cuddle and sometimes falls asleep on me, but she is frightened of other people so nobody else sees this side of her.



Tahlia is a little fighter!

It feels lovely to know that I can be there for her and give her the best possible life. I love her so much, and she has enriched my life immensely. I would urge other people to consider adopting an animal with special needs or medical problems — not only can you make a great difference to their lives, they will definitely make a difference to yours. ■



WHAT IS HYDROCEPHALUS?

Our expert vet Nikki Gaut explains: "Hydrocephalus (meaning 'water on the brain') is one of the more commonly recognised congenital brain disorders seen in kittens as young as two to three months of age. It is caused by an obstruction or over-production of cerebrospinal fluid which leads to varying degrees of dilation of the spaces within the brain, putting pressure on, and damaging, the tissue.

"Affected kittens are often small in size, have enlargement of the cranium, eye position abnormalities and can exhibit abnormal behaviour. The greater the amount of fluid, the greater the severity of damage to the brain and the more likely neurological abnormalities, such as ataxia (wobbliness when walking), seizures and visual deficits, are."

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TRUE CAT TALE

From Tag's to riches



Illustration: Nancy Trott

Rena Cadey describes the little lady that came into her family and stole all their hearts.

Affectionately called Fluffy by my husband and Jammy by me, Jamaica came into my life courtesy of Thanet Animal Group (Tag). A very short 'Lonely Hearts' piece in the local newspaper brought us together — 'Homeless semi-longhaired, recently spayed black and white female cat needs good home.' The small photo accompanying the appeal did little justice to her, or so I thought, and the black moustache to the side of her white nose didn't remind me of anyone in particular.

I had already inherited a rescued ginger tom, Sandy, from my elderly deceased friend and also had another rescue tabby tom, christened Tom by my imaginative son, so wasn't really in the market to adopt an additional member to the family. However, it is said cats choose their owners and I instinctively felt that Jamaica had chosen me.

Following our initial enquiry to the rescue centre, there followed a brief inspection of our home and with the inspector's approval, we arranged to collect Jamaica from her temporary home.

Her unusual name had been chosen by the centre's vet. Jamaica was a stray and a local cafe owner had been feeding her scraps. When he noticed she was gaining a lot of weight and about to give birth, and also her pitiful and unkept state, he called in the animal rescue centre.

First stop was the vet and when the tangled, pathetic bundle was carefully lifted onto the table, one of the centre's volunteers said: "What ja-make-a-that then!" The vet responded: "Meet Jamaica!"

Following her spaying and the removal of her tangled fur, Jamaica still looked a pitiful sight, but that was now all behind her.

My son enthusiastically accompanied me to the rescue centre to collect our new family member — who we hadn't yet met in the fur, or in Jamaica's case, lack of it. She was in a large pen with other unfortunate homeless cats, but she somehow sat alone with a superior air about her.

She reminded me of the film 'Lady and the Tramp'. She had the persona of a lady but she looked like a tramp. She was quite small and her shaved pink stomach was witness to her recent trauma. She really did look in need of some TLC and that she certainly would get.

We lifted her effortlessly into what seemed like a huge cat basket to take her home, even though my son saw other more desirable specimens in the cage also looking for homes! But no, Jamaica was coming home with us and she was going to be beautiful.

After an initial settling-in period, Jammy gradually grew back her missing fur, accompanied by her superior air; she seemed to know that she was special.

Following my husband's retirement a few years later, we decided to buy a holiday home in central France. At this time, we only had Jammy to consider and care for, as both Tom and Sandy had passed on. Because we intended to spend as much time as possible in rural France, Jammy would obviously come with us, and because she was so laid-back and serene in nature, we knew she would have no problem with that decision.

"It is said cats choose their owners and I instinctively felt that Jamaica had chosen me."

Deciding to take a pet abroad can be complicated, but once her rabies jab, 'chip and pet passport were sorted, she travelled well for the few hours it took us to cross the Channel and drive down to her 'second home'.

Once settled into the cottage, which took about two weeks, she spent most of her time lying in the sun, exploring the outbuildings and chasing lizards. The big, old barn was full of cobwebs and hidden treasure and when she reappeared at dinner time, she would be peering through what looked like a very old dirty net curtain — not very ladylike!

At night, usually after she had used her litter tray unfortunately (it was a small cottage!), she would wash before settling down for the night, next to me on my pillow, to sleep and purr contentedly. She was adorable and we felt so very



"She was adorable and we felt so privileged to have her living with us."

privileged to have her living with us.

It was while we were in France that I first noticed all was not well with Jammy. She hadn't been eating as well and sometimes appeared distressed. Before returning to the UK, pets have to visit the local vet for a health check and de-flea.

I already knew that something was wrong in her stomach and the vet confirmed this. She had a tumour. He suggested we saw our own vet on our return, who confirmed the diagnosis. Then too, of course, the dreaded question. The vet confirmed that she wasn't in any pain or distress so we took her back home and, as is my way, let nature take its course.

Jammy spent the last two weeks of her life with us, mainly sleeping in one of her preferred spots under the ice poppies in her Kent garden. Fully aware that she may wander off, we kept her in at night.

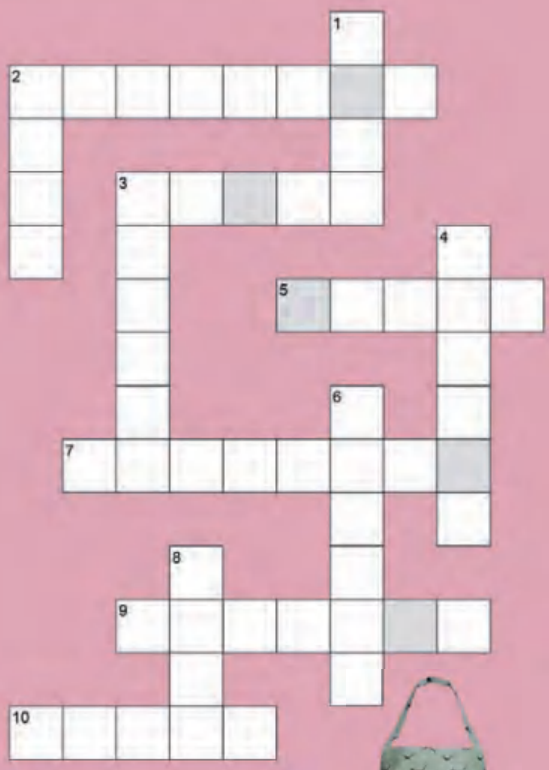
Early one sunny morning in July, my husband found Fluffy peacefully 'asleep' in her favourite spot where she would sit in winter gazing out on her garden. On reflection, the rescue cat inspector had said years ago how Jamaica would enjoy sitting on that particular spot, looking through the patio doors out to the garden!

A few weeks after her passing, a tall pink hollyhock magically appeared, towering over the ice poppies where she had slept. It reigned superior and stately, looking down on the poppies and daisies beneath it.

Jammy had been a popular cat in the neighbourhood and often turned up in their houses as if by right! Once, when gardening by the front gates, an elderly man asked me: "Where's Hitler?" Not only was her moustache very visible, but she would sit looking out through the gates surveying all before her — it was an easy mistake to make if you weren't aware that she was female and very much a lady.

If she hadn't already been so aptly named by the local vet, I would have called her Lady. It is said you can take the cat out of the street, but you can't take the street out of the cat. In Jammy's case, we did; breeding will out! She was always destined to be the Lady of the Manor. ■

KITTYWORD



ACROSS

2. The five-page section of the magazine packed with cat-themed items to shop (8)
3. The name of Margaret Mountford's cheeky male cat (5)
5. Vet Dr Bradley _____ writes about common heart problems this month (5)
7. The organisation helping to reunite lost cats with their owners (8)
9. If you love cats, you'll love these too! (7)
10. Our 23-year-old Golden Oldie of the Month (5)

DOWN

1. The star cat in this month's Pawtraits pages (4)
2. The founder of Yorkshire Cat Rescue and author of our monthly rescue diary, ____ Atkinson (4)
3. The name of this month's gorgeous 'My Special Cat' (6)
4. Our resident grooming expert, Anita _____ (6)
6. The Cat Photographer who has published a new book, _____ Chandoha (6)
8. This month's featured breed, the loving Australian ____ (4)

CLUE: THE CHEEKY REX BREED IN THIS ISSUE (5).

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Spot the difference

Can you spot the five differences between these two pics? Find the answers on page 84.







Alexander Moss of Poulton-le-Fylde, Lancs.



Merlin Hodson of Cambridge.



Pumpkin and Cosmo Spruce of Swaffham, Norfolk.

Pawtraits

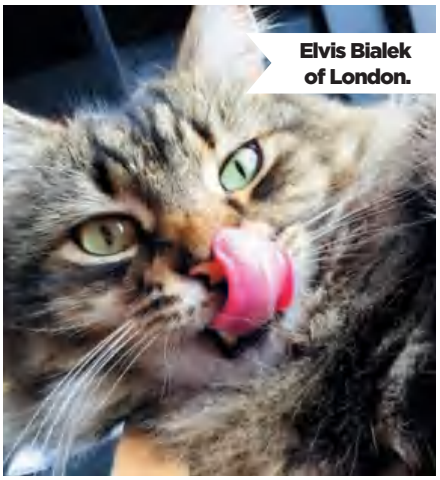
We adore these readers' kitty pics!



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Rupert and Cubby Kain of Kettering, Northants.



Shira Stevens of Ellon, Aberdeenshire.

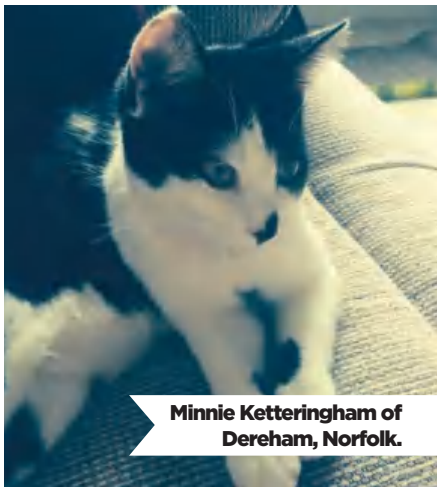


Lily Dell of Milton Keynes, Bucks.

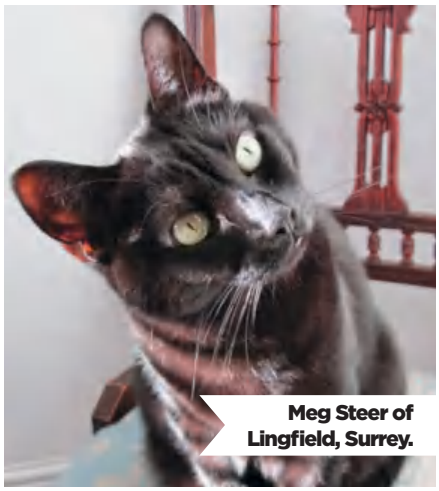


Star Photo

Roxy Blay of Crawley, West Sussex.



Minnie Ketteringham of Dereham, Norfolk.



Meg Steer of Lingfield, Surrey.

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TRUE CAT TALE

Humans can be trained!

Two weeks of cat sitting can't be that difficult, right? Alison Webster begs to differ!


JJay.

My son had brought me flowers. How nice, you might think. I love my son dearly, don't get me wrong, but there is usually an ulterior motive.

The litter box arrived first. It was huge and was followed by an entourage of blankets, food pouches, biscuits, bowls, brushes and toys. I felt like one of Cleopatra's hand maidens! I was, in fact, on the right track — just the wrong gender.

The cat carrier came through into the living room, and there was a lot of scratching, whining and other such distressing noises. I looked at my son, pleading inwardly for help. He just shrugged. "He's fine, Mum," my son smiled, or was it a smirk? "I'll call you this evening, please stop worrying."

The carrier was open, but its passenger seemed reluctant to disembark. I decided to go into 'mummy mode'. I carefully placed his blanket on the sofa, near the radiator for warmth, putting his toys at its side. I took out his bowls, washed and dried them, and filled one with biscuits and one with fresh water — constantly checking in my newly acquired cat book for pointers and reassurance.

Hours passed, so I went about my weekend chores and prepared my dinner (a nice, warm chicken salad and a much-needed glass of wine).

I closed the fridge door and there he stood! Staring appraisingly at me with those huge, pale green eyes. I leant forward to stroke his soft marmalade fur, and he stepped back, out of my reach. So I carefully carried my dinner into the living room and began deftly channel-hopping with my remote.

He sat in front of me, watching me eat — it was most disconcerting. I knew I shouldn't give in. But it seemed to me it would be rude not to offer my guest an appetiser. I placed a piece of chicken on the floor; he sniffed it, poked it... and ate it. After I'd shared some more of my dinner with my new guest, he decided to follow me into the kitchen and began rattling his biscuit dish.

"HE HAD SHIFTED THE ORBIT OF MY WORLD, AND REMINDED ME OF THE JOY IT WAS TO BE A NANNY, ALBEIT A SURROGATE."

I placed food in the bowl. He looked me up and down, and then looked at the kitchen door. I removed myself from his presence. Apparently, I was not allowed to watch HIM eat!

It was 11.30pm and my son had not telephoned, so I went to bed. I left doors ajar but closed all the windows, just in case of a jailbreak.

I woke early; it was still dark. I thought I could hear a thrumming sound. I opened my eyes, and two luminous eyes looked back.

My bed was covered with various items. A catnip mouse, two feather-like sticks and a clump of cat litter. It was a white silk duvet, the first of many schoolgirl errors.

A week later, kneading needle-like claws, a few ground-in tea-time treats and several thousand cat hairs had thoroughly broken my duvet in. It was totally unrecognisable. In the living room, I found the cat blanket under the sofa, replaced by two expensive and luxuriously soft chenille cushion covers. After my initial outrage, I thought, 'Good choice'!

It had only been two weeks, but they had flown by. His furry eyebrows still locked together in frustration — mostly at my inability to understand the simplest commands, but he persevered, altruistic to the last.

My rewards were many-fold. I got to tidy up after him, clean his eating utensils, vacuum (regularly) and, last but not least, clean out his litter tray — such a joy!

But when I was least expecting it, he would head-bump me, rub against me or slow-blink. He had shifted the orbit of my world, and reminded me of the joy it was to be nanny, albeit a surrogate. I had received the pleasure and reward of his company.

In return, he had reacquainted me with how beautiful it was to accept and receive love from one of God's amazing creatures.

Until next time, JJay, my little man. Ah, I hear a familiar car; my son has arrived... It appears, Your Majesty, that your carriage awaits!

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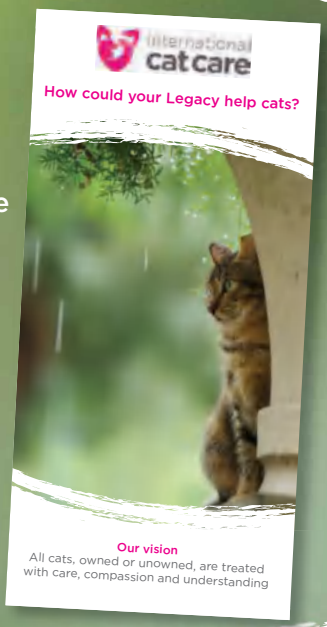
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SHORT STORY

Coming out in the wash

A new friendship is buoyed by a ginger and white stray, in this short story by S Bee.

Marsha glanced at the clock. It was 6.15pm and her new washing machine should have been delivered.

With a sigh, she gathered up her laundry, stuffed it into a holdall, and set off to the nearby laundrette.

Was it still open? Her heart leapt when she spotted the lights still blazing. Marsha held up her holdall.

"Will there be enough time to wash and dry this lot before you shut?" she asked the assistant. She was around Marsha's own age (mid-thirties) with freckles and long brown hair.

"Should be. We're not busy," she smiled.

Then, to Marsha's astonishment, a ginger and white cat strolled in, seemingly out of nowhere. He approached her, rubbing his head against her legs.

"Meet Boris," the assistant stated.

"He's lovely." Marsha stroked Boris, who purred happily. "Has he followed you from home?"

"This is his home." She pushed open a door. "Look."

The assistant showed her the area where stock was kept. In between big boxes of washing powder, there was a cat basket, bowls for water and food, and, around a corner, a litter tray.

"He's a stray. I tried to take him home with me, but he ran back here. Don't worry, I've given him some flea and worming treatment," she said.

"How does he get in and out?"

"There's a broken slat in the fence in the backyard. He sneaks through there. He always turns up before I close."

"He sleeps here?" Although Marsha had heard of hotel cats, she'd never come across a resident laundrette cat before!

"Yes. I know I could take him to the local animal shelter, but I've become quite fond of the little fella."

They wandered back to the main laundrette and found Boris curled up close to a dryer.

"I'm making a coffee. Fancy one?"

"That'd be great. I'm Marsha. I'm new to the area," Marsha said.

"I'm Tess."

The two women discovered they were both single with no children. They both liked the same music, TV programmes and, of course, they shared a love of cats.

Time flew by, and soon Marsha was packing her clean laundry away. "Pop in to mine any time," she called to Tess.

"I will," she waved cheerfully. But would Tess keep her promise?

When Tess was busy, the laundrette was somewhere quiet for Marsha, a children's book illustrator, to mull over her work projects. She found it the ideal place to dream up ideas.

Tess had turned into a friend — the two of them enjoyed shopping trips and lunches out. Yet Boris preyed heavily on Marsha's mind.

"I'd like to offer Boris a home." At the laundrette, Marsha waved a new cat carrier.

Between them, they



managed to get Boris into the cat carrier. He miaowed loudly. Was she doing the right thing?

She had everything ready for Boris — bowls and food, a cat basket, a litter tray, toys. She'd even had a cat flap fitted in the kitchen door.

Once they arrived home, Marsha spoke to Boris gently and gave him lots of affection. He sniffed around, ate the food and drank the water.

Marsha left him to settle in. After half an hour, she went to check — her heart lurched. He'd gone! He'd bolted through the cat flap (she'd forgotten to lock it).

Her phone rang. It was Tess.

"Marsha? Boris has turned up at the laundrette."

At least he's okay, she consoled herself.

On her next visit, Marsha found Tess in tears.

"What's the matter?"

"Two things," she sniffed. "One — Boris has gone missing, and two — the laundrette is closing down!" Tess wailed.

Marsha noticed that Tess's first priority was the precious puss — not the loss of her job.

"And the laundrette owner has boarded up the slat in the fence," she said. "So Boris can't get in anymore."

"He may have turned up at someone's house. Strays are good at hunting out free cat cafes," Marsha soothed. "We could try posting 'lost pet' notices. But what about you? Have you another job lined up?"

"No," she gulped.

They waited for Boris to amble in through the main door, yet they waited in vain.

As she heaved her holdall into the house, Marsha prayed that Boris had presented himself at a kind household where they'd take care of him.

Her answer machine was flashing. The message was from the delivery company — her washing machine was finally being delivered tomorrow!

She trotted upstairs to put the towels away. At the doorway to her bedroom, she stopped. There was a strange round shape on the bed, snoring away.

"Boris!" she cried.

At the sound of her voice, he awoke, allowing her to fuss and pet him. She'd kept the cat flap unlocked, hoping that he'd remember his brief visit and return — and he had!

She rang Tess, who was hugely relieved. "It's as if he knew where to go," she chuckled.

> "Although Marsha had heard of hotel cats, she'd never come across a laundrette cat before!"

Meanwhile, Marsha tried to make an appointment with the vet to have Boris microchipped and vaccinated. Eventually, someone answered the phone.

"Sorry you've had problems contacting us," the vet nurse began, when Marsha and Boris arrived. "We need to hire a new receptionist. Our last one left to have a baby and she's decided not to return to work."

Oh, Marsha knew someone who would fit the bill quite nicely here!

The vet gave Boris a general health check. "He's fine," she said. Good!

When she arrived home, her publisher rang: "We adore that new ginger and white cat in the background of your recent illustrations. We'd like to feature him in a series of books. Could you create a lovable yet quirky feline character?"

"Oh," she smiled, as Boris weaved around her legs. "I'm sure I can manage that!" ■

COLLARS AND TAGS

Ensure your kitty is both safe and stylish with this fantastic selection of safety collars and ID tags.



1 Available in a range of attractive designs, including florals and stripes, these collars by Alice's Imagination are handmade with a soft fabric design that is machine washable. They also include a large bell and are adjustable. They cost £5 each from ItsAlicesImagination at **www.etsy.com**

2 Trixie's range of cat collars includes the satin flower collar, available in purple (pictured), pink and red. Complete with a bell and pretty beaded flower, it costs £2.49. If sparkle is more your cat's thing, then Trixie's glitter cat collar is perfect. With silver detailing and a bell, it features a sweet rubber love heart and costs £3.99. Visit **www.trixie.de/en** to find stockists.

3 Ideal for cats that tend to roam at night, Rosewood's reflective floral collar will allow your cat to be more visible in the dark. It is available in orange or pink (pictured) designs and costs £2.49 from **www.petplanet.co.uk** or tel. **01506 605150**. Rosewood's red bow-tie collar is perfect for posh pussycats. Featuring a bow-tie design with diamanté and silver bell, it looks great and is fully adjustable. It costs £4.50 from **www.petsathome.com** or tel. **0800 328 4204**.

4 Creature Clothes has a selection of stripy fabric cat collars, all of which feature velvet lining for added comfort and slider adjustment. They cost £10.45 each from **www.creatureclothes.com** or tel. **01986 875509**.

5 With Friendship Collar, both you and your cat get the chance to match — with a safety collar for your cat and a matching bracelet for you! The ideal gift for cat lovers on Valentine's Day, the latest edition comes in pastel pink with gilded hearts, making it the perfect way to declare your love for your feline friend. The PU set costs £20 (includes your cat's collar and your bracelet) from **www.friendshipcollar.com/uk**



6 Zukiestyle's collars come in a range of different designs, including this blue Aztec jewel collar (£7) and sweet cupcake charm collar (£6.50). Made with soft but strong polypropylene black webbing, they are both adjustable and come with silver bells attached. The cupcake collar also features an adorable cupcake charm! Visit **www.zukiestyle.co.uk** or tel. **07734 393823**.



Matching friendship bracelet

7 The Ergoflex cat collar from Ferplast is made from innovative Techno-rubber, which ensures great resistance, comfort and practicality. It is non-toxic, hypo-allergenic and waterproof, and comes in four different colours, complete with a small bell. It costs £6.99 from selected pet shops. Visit **www.ferplast.com/gb**

8 Mrs Simpson's Collars are available in a wide variety of fun and eye-catching designs. These handmade collars are available in three different sizes (suitable for a kitten, cat or small dog) and are strong and lightweight whilst being comfortable. They cost £6.50 each from MrsSimpsonsCollars at **www.etsy.com**

9 Available in a range of colours and designs, these handmade collars from The Natural Pet Toy Company are adjustable, feature a removable bell and a D-ring so you can add your own ID tag or charm. They are also punched with a rivet fastening for extra strength and durability. They cost £7.95 each from **www.naturalpet-toy.co.uk**

Red Dingo's cat collars are available in a wide selection of different variations, all of which are adjustable. The reflective cat collar (£7.35) is made from strong, durable nylon, features a cartoon fish pattern and helps your kitty stay visible when he's out and about. Red Dingo's plain cat collar (£5.95) is available in a wide range of colours and is made from strong fray-proof nylon. Both feature coloured bells, unique fish-shaped safety clips and are available from **www.dapperpets.co.uk** or tel. **01992 524077**.





Cheshire and Wain's selection of collars are perfect for pussycats who like to be pampered. Available in a range of different designs, they are made from soft Italian leather. The Ivor Luxury Cat Collar (£45, top) comes in a fun camouflage pattern, ideal for adventurous cats; the pink leather collar (£35, centre) from the Colour Pop collection is great for cats who like to stand out from the crowd; and the Heritage Edition Bernie luxury cat collar (£55, bottom) has a traditional look. Visit **www.cheshireandwain.com**

All of the collars included in this guide feature a quick-release safety clip, which means that if your cat gets his collar caught and needs to break free, the collar will simply spring open to allow him to escape. We advise that our readers only ever put safety collars on their cats.

Top tip!

While ID tags are a handy way for others to identify your cat, it is also advised to have your cat microchipped.

Cheshire and Wain's selection of cat tags are perfect for keeping your puss safe while staying stylish. Available in brass or chrome, the Classic ID tags measure 22mm and feature the Cheshire and Wain logo, or add some fun to your feline's collar with the gold fish-shaped design, both of which can be engraved with your contact details. They cost £12 each from **www.cheshireandwain.com**





Trixie's ID tag is a discreet and simple way to help prevent your cat getting lost. The silver screw-off tag contains an address label inside to add all of your details. It costs 99p — find stockists at **www.trixie.de/en**



Hoobynoo World's personalised cat tags come in a variety of different colours and designs, featuring cute cartoon cats. They are made from aluminium and can be personalised with your cat's name and your details. They cost £8.50 each from **www.hoobynooworld.co.uk** or tel. **01843 592298**.



Available in a selection of shapes, sizes and designs, Cloud and Currents' pet tags are uniquely crafted from walnut wood and can be engraved with your pet's name on the front and your details on the reverse. Prices start at £13 from **www.cloudsandcurrents.com**



Available in a plethora of different designs featuring fun hashtags, HashtagDogtag's tags for cats feature a charm, middle and back, making them a unique addition to your cat's collar. They can be engraved with your cat's details and cost £13.50 from **www.hashtagdogtag.co.uk**

Red Dingo's small (20mm) cat tags are made from solid stainless steel and are available in a range of different designs and colours. They come with free engraving and cost £9 each from **www.dapperpets.co.uk** or tel. **01992 524077**.



Punky Funky Jewellery's ID tags are suitable for both cats and dogs, with a variety of picture stamps available to add a touch of fun and personality to the tag. The tags measure 25mm, and can be hand-stamped with your pet's name and your phone number on the back. They cost £5.50 for single-sided, or £6 for double-sided from Punky Funky Jewellery at **www.etsy.com**



You can match your kitty right down to the tag with this adorable 'Love' charm from Friendship Collar. One is made for you to attach to your bracelet, while the other (pictured) will fit perfectly on your cat's collar. The set is gold plated and costs £18 from **www.friendshipcollar.com/uk**



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Your Cat magazine is also available as a digital edition!

If you've got an Apple, Android, or Kindle Fire device then you can download the Your Cat app for free! Once you have downloaded the Your Cat app, you can also download our FREE sample issue to get a taste of what's in store each month.

You can also save money with a subscription to the digital edition as it will cost just £19.99 for 12 months! We also have a number of back issues available in the Your Cat app, so don't worry if you have missed an issue — all you have to do is download it to your tablet or mobile device.

www.yourcat.co.uk/digital-editions

WHAT'S NEW PUSSYCAT?

HANNAH HEARTS

Make a statement with this rubber strap 'Cat Me Up' watch by Swatch. Based around the grin of Alice in Wonderland's famous Cheshire Cat, this unique purple and pink striped watch details the cat's eyes, whiskers and mouth. With a quirky twist, the cat's smile is transparent so you can see some of the inner workings of the watch. It costs £47.50 from www.watchshop.com or tel. 0800 024 8794.





IAMS® has launched a new range of wet cat food pouches — IAMS Delights™ — which provide your cat with a complete and balanced diet. Free from added artificial flavours and colourings, IAMS Delights come in nine different varieties; Senior with Chicken in Gravy, Kitten with Chicken in Gravy, Salmon & Trout in Jelly, Tuna & Peas in Gravy, Chicken & Turkey in Gravy, Turkey & Duck in Jelly, Lamb & Red Pepper in Gravy, Beef & Liver in Gravy and Lamb & Liver in Jelly. Available to buy in 85g pouches or in multi-packs of 12, 24 or 48, they cost from £4.89 and are available from specialist pet shops and supermarkets. Visit **www.iams.co.uk**



A must for all the crazy cat ladies out there, this mug features a pink design and paw print shape, emblazoned with the words 'Crazy Cat Lady'. It makes the perfect present for cat fans (or a treat for yourself!), is dishwasher safe and comes in a gift box. Buy it for £8.95 from **www.prezzybox.com** or tel. **0844 2495 007**.



Make your big day all the more purrfect by adding a figurine of a feline friend to your wedding cake. Made from hand-painted porcelain, one of these playful kitties will add a sweet touch to any cat-loving couple's cake. Available in grey and white, black and white or ginger and white, they cost £14.83 each from **www.confetti.co.uk/shop** or tel. **03300 884466**.

Keep your cat's claws in top condition while encouraging play and exercise with the All for Paws Classic Comfort Scratch Post. This sisal post features a fun removable feather wand toy, which can be taken out to play separately with your cat. The post is easy to assemble, measures 30cm x 30cm x 60cm and costs £29.99 from your local independent pet retailer. To find your nearest stockist tel. 0115 982 3900.



Eyenimal's Pet Fountain encourages your cat to drink more water with a continuous bubbling stream. Simply fill the removable dome with water and plug in to create a drink station for your feline friend. It is also suitable for small dogs, has no filters to replace and has a 1.5 litre capacity. It costs £19.45 from **www.amazon.co.uk**





PRODUCT REVIEW ONLINE

Recently launched in the UK, Kernel Kat Cat Litter is a flushable and environmentally-friendly cat litter. Made from sustainable, biodegradable, 100 per cent natural corn kernels, the litter claims to last up to five times longer than other eco and non-eco cat litters. It uses clump-on-contact technology to prevent wastage and has a powerful odour binding capability, ensuring your home stays smelling fresh and clean. It is available in 5L (£9.99), 10L (£17.99) and 20L (£24.99) packs — visit www.kernelkat.co.uk for more information and to find stockists.





Newly-launched contemporary pet product shop Milo and Fido has a selection of handmade cat beds, perfect for your feline friend to curl up and keep cosy. The Sleepy Cat Cave is made from merino wool and is in the shape of an adorable yawning kitty. It is available in a selection of colours, measures 30cm x 46cm x 60cm and costs £74.99. The Ombré Cat Cave is made from high quality felted wool and comes in a range of different colour variations. It measures 46cm x 26cm and costs £34.99. Buy them online at **www.miloandfido.com**

Due to the popularity of its 'Crazy Cat Lady' design, Heritage Crafts has decided to feature her in more designs. The first of which is 'Baking with Crazy Cat Lady', which features the lady herself baking a cake while surrounded by cats and various cat-themed baking utensils! It costs £22.95 from **www.hcrafts.com** or tel. **01889 575256**.





As every individual cat breed is unique and has specific nutritional requirements, ROYAL CANIN® has added a wet food to both its British Shorthair and Maine Coon ranges. The British Shorthair Wet Food contains a moderate fat content for effective weight management, and helps to support a healthy urinary system, skin and coat. The Maine Coon Wet Food helps to maintain healthy bones and joints, promotes healthy skin and coat, and has a high energy concentrated formula. Both foods can be fed alongside ROYAL CANIN's breed specific dry food, with the 85g pouches priced at 99p or £11.88 for a box of 12. Visit **www.royalcanin.co.uk** to find your nearest stockist.

HOME IS WHERE THE CAT IS



'Meow do I look?' make-up bag, £18 from **www.alphabetbags.com** or tel. **01223 269748**.



Spotty cat teapot, £18 by Disaster Designs at **www.lisaangel.co.uk** or tel. **0800 193 5472**.



Kittens cushion, £19.99 from **www.gettingpersonal.co.uk**



Cat coffee cosy, £48 from **www.poppytreffry.co.uk** or tel. **01736 369247**.



Purrcolator mug, £10 from **www.louise-tate.com** or tel. **01939 260696**.



Cat storage tin, £14.95 from **www.annabeljames.co.uk** or tel. **0345 548 0210**.



Fearne cat cushion, £15 from **www.very.co.uk** or tel. **0844 822 2321**.





Set of four cat and dog tumblers, £2.50 from **direct.asda.com** or tel. **0800 952 3003**.



Party cat doorstop, £4.99 from **www.dunelm.com** or tel. **0345 165 6565**.

FOR THE CAT



Wooden personalised pet bed crate, £34.95 from **www.plantabox.co.uk** or tel. **01392 829977**.



Fabergee rose bowl, £64 from **www.swankymaison.com**

KITTY LOVE



Personalised kitten love note cards (set of 12), £14.95 by Little Ink at **www.notonthehighstreet.com** or tel. **0345 259 1359**.



'You me and the cat' print, £14 by LH Design at **www.notonthehighstreet.com** or tel. **0345 259 1359**.



Personalised 'Love my cat' cushion, £35 by Tillyanna at **www.notonthehighstreet.com** or tel. **0345 259 1359**.

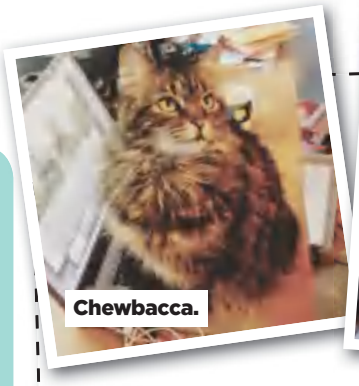


'I love my humans' cat bowl, £25.95 from **www.notonthehighstreet.com** or tel. **0345 259 1359**.



Tiffany's cat mug, £20 from **www.kiittadesigns.co.uk**

Pack of four kitty coasters, £15 from **www.finestimaginary.com**



Chewbacca.



Tiger.

GETTING PURRSONAL WITH ILLUSTRATOR ELLA GOODWIN

Q How do cats inspire your designs?
A I love the knowing nature of cats; the feeling that there is deep philosophy about the world going on inside their little heads. The depth of personality and the individuality of a cat never cease to amaze me, from the super affectionate, head-bonking, purring, silly puss to the aloof, mysterious and slightly sneaky; they are all beautiful and probably getting ready for the takeover as we speak! This inspires them appearing in my work in many different guises from the fun and silly to the delicate and floral. Cats are also just downright beautiful so who could resist illustrating such wondrous creatures?!

Q Do you own any cats — if so, can you tell us a bit about them?
A I am always surrounded by two snoring furry circles called Tiger and Chewbacca — they're both uber-fluffy tabbies and are sisters. They do tend to show their love for each other via the odd swipe as they're so different, and I think they get a bit jealous if one is getting one more love than the other. They're nine years old now, and are loved to pieces by the whole family.

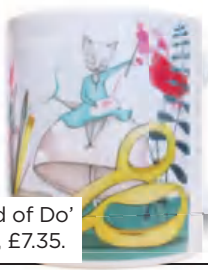
Q Will you be doing any more cat collections in the future?
A Absolutely. I'm working on some pieces for a new show which is based on traditional fairytales and 'The Boy who Drew Cats' is in there; I'm also working on more textiles adorned with cat illustrations for cushions and tea towels. I've been working with oil paints recently and painting over vintage greetings cards with cats to make some sweet but surreal portraits. There are always more cats in the pipeline!



'Crazy cat lady' necklace, £16.24.

Q Which is your favourite product from your current cat collection and why?
A I'm really pleased with the mugs and the pencil cases. The mugs come in decorated gift boxes, which really make them feel special. My new range is all about 'The Land of Do'. This comes from a story which I am working into a graphic novel at the moment. I love the idea that The Land of Do is a motivational place and that's what those cats and their crafty equipment are all about!

Buy Ella's designs from **www.ellagoodwin.co.uk**



'Land of Do' mug, £7.35.



'Time for Kit-tea' mug, £8.21.

CATWALK



1 Kitty sweatshirt, £65 from **www.lazyoaf.com**

2 Charlotte cat dress, £65 from **www.voodoovixen.co.uk** or tel. **0207 702 3155**.

3 Cat face coin purse bag charm, £22 from **www.dunelondon.com** or tel. **0333 240 7306**.

4 'I love cats' heart necklace, £16 by Very Beryl at **www.notonthehighstreet.com** or tel. **0345 259 1359**.

5 Kitty portrait watch, £18 by Junk Jewels at **www.notonthehighstreet.com** or tel. **0345 259 1359**.

6 Rhinestone tiger party dress, £29.99 from **www.lookagain.co.uk** or tel. **0871 244 4456**.

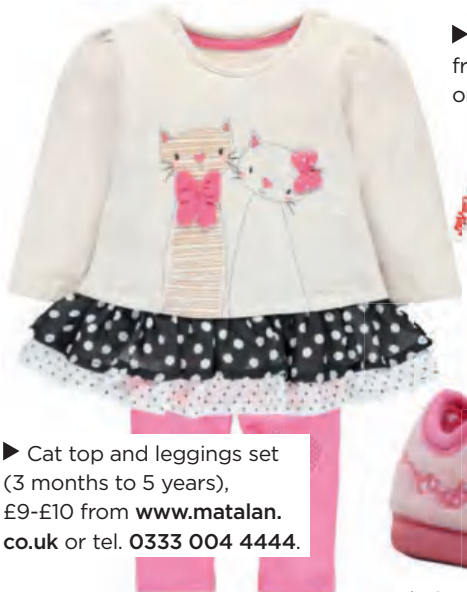
7 Cat nap pyjamas, £10 from **www.clothingattesco.com** or tel. **0800 323 4070**.

8 Domino duo cat necklace, £27.95 from **www.littlemoose.co.uk**

9 Novelty furry cat slippers, £12 from **www.southbeachofficial.com**

10 Three pairs of Garfield socks, £3 from Primark. Find stores at **www.primark.com**

KIDDY CAT CORNER



▶ Cat top and leggings set (3 months to 5 years), £9-£10 from **www.matalan.co.uk** or tel. **0333 004 4444**.



▶ Kittens mini rucksack, £16 from **www.cathkidston.com** or tel. **0845 026 2440**.



▲ Cat slippers, £4 from **direct.asda.com** or tel. **0800 952 3003**.



▼ 'I can see you' cat top, £6.99 from **www.zara.com** or tel. **0800 030 4238**.



▲ Fleece cat hat (1-13 years), £4-£6 from **www.clothingattesco.com**



▶ Fluffy cat jumper, £12 from **www.matalan.co.uk** or tel. **0333 004 4444**.



▶ Pack of two cat print dribble bibs, £3 from **www.clothingattesco.com**

birth& Growth

ROYAL CANIN

For a great start in life!

A nutritional programme designed to help support the future health of your kitten





1st GROWTH STAGE from birth to 4 months

Up to four months old, your kitten has rapid growth and development. Energy needs are high and plenty of good quality protein is needed. Kittens lose the natural immunities they receive from their mother's milk and their own immune system are still developing.

ROYAL CANIN®'s Babycat products will provide extra support during these early stages of development and help to reinforce natural defences during this period of low immunity.



2nd GROWTH STAGE from 4 months to 1 year/15 months (depending on product)

From around 4 months, ROYAL CANIN® kitten diets are adapted to account for a slower pace of growth. Energy needs reduce slightly but are still higher than adult cats, and protein needs remain high to account for continued muscle development. A larger, harder kibble helps encourage crunching and support dental health at an early stage. Support for the kittens vulnerable digestion and defences is continued.



Nutrition plays a critical role in starting your cat off on the right foot and meeting their growing needs.

ROYAL CANIN® pet food is only available from specialist retailers.
Visit **www.royalcanin.co.uk** to find a specialist near you.

royalcanin .co.uk

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A blue spotted adult Mist.

PURRFECT PEDIGREE

Misty marvels

Looks, loyalty, love and laughs — the Australian Mist has it all.

It's not yet been a decade since Australians Mists were first imported to the UK from Down Under, but they're already making quite the impression on British cat lovers.

These beautifully ticked kitties are amongst the most moderate breeds — with nothing extreme about their appearance, personality or care requirements, you'll find that they comfortably slip in to your furry family, no matter what sort of lifestyle you have.

"Mists were developed to be indoor cats," explains Tricia Bristow, chairman of the Australian Mist Cat Society. "They make wonderful pets and are suitable for families with young children, people living on their own, and the elderly and disabled."

According to Tricia, once you let an Australian Mist into your heart and your home, you'll be lent a 'helping' paw in every task — whether you need some assistance or not!

"They are interested in everything that goes on in the house, especially when you are on the computer or tablet.

"They want to be involved in everything you do, from sorting the washing to making the bed, from helping to unpack the shopping to sampling what you are cooking. They particularly like helping with anything to do with food and they can be quite greedy if you let them," she adds.

Their foodie tendencies are only reinforced by their cunning intelligence. Owners should be wary of leaving food unattended, and these Aussie wonders can soon calculate their way past the intricacies of a closed fridge door. You may even need to consider using child locks on your cupboards to stop these wannabe gluttons tipping the scales!

You needn't worry too much about the Mists' antics though — Tricia assures that they're well behaved and their intelligence is rarely put to cheeky use.

"They're playful and often persuade their owners to play fetch with a screwed-up ball of paper or a toy," she says. "They are very lively as youngsters but less so as adults.

"And if you want a lap cat, then a Mist is for you! The Australian Mist is an even-tempered cat that is very tolerant of being handled and is not inclined to scratch.

"Even as tiny kittens, they love to curl up with their servants! A Mist owner can expect a lifetime of purrs

Breed in brief

Breed code

AUM

Average lifespan

LATE TEENS

Temperament

Affectionate, intelligent, inquisitive, adaptable

Availability

Very rare

Price of kittens

£450-£500

Average weight

MALES 7KG

FEMALES 3KG

Available colour patterns:

Spotted and marbled



They've got the look

This shorthaired breed's Burmese ancestors handed down their brown, blue, chocolate and lilac colouring, whereas gold and peach were Abyssinian contributions. A seventh colour, caramel, is currently going through the recognition process with GCCF. Australian Mists have either spotted or marbled coats, although both patterns have spotted tummies.

Their coat patterns have three aspects: the ground colour, the pattern, and the 'misting'. The 'misty' appearance is caused by ticking, inherited from the agouti (banded) coat pattern of the Abyssinian breed.

All Mists have large, green eyes (any shade from chartreuse to aquamarine), which are set wide apart to offer a gentle expression, balanced well with their moderately large, round-tipped ears.

They have medium to large bodies with gently rounded, broad chests. These muscular cats often feel heavier than they appear.

History & origins

As many Australian states don't permit cats to roam, Australian Mists were developed to be indoor cats by Dr Truda Straede in the mid-seventies.

Over nine years, she bred the best parts of other breeds — half-Burmese, and a quarter each Abyssinian and Australian Domestic Tabby — and the Spotted Mist was officially recognised in Australia in 1986. Once the marbled pattern was introduced, the breed saw its name change.

Two pregnant females were imported to the UK in 2007, followed two years later by six more males and pregnant females.

In 2011, Mists were accepted for showing by GCCF and there are hopes that the breed will achieve Championship status once the number of cats with merits has grown.



A beautiful chocolate spotted.

"They need company and devotion but they give a huge amount back in return."

Did you know?

Australian Mists are now being exported further afield, including Norway and the USA.

and cuddles from a loyal and loving kitty."

Australian Mists were bred to be indoor-only cats and it's advised that new owners don't allow their latest additions to roam outside.

Tricia says: "There are too many dangers outside, one of which is the likelihood of them being stolen as they are so friendly — this has happened!

"Many owners cat-proof their gardens and supervise their cats outside, or build a pen where Mists can enjoy the sunshine and watch the birds. Mists can also be trained to walk on a harness; many enjoy being taken out this way." ▶

"Even as tiny kittens, they love to curl up with their servants!"

Choosing a kitten

With only a few breeders in the UK, potential owners may have to join a waiting list for a Mist kitten, especially if you want a specific colour or pattern. See **www.australianmistcats.co.uk** for a list of breeders.

Tricia recommends speaking to as many breeders as possible before deciding where to get your kitten from, and making sure that you meet mum (and dad, if possible) whenever you see a litter.

Kittens should be lively, happy and healthy — they'll likely be far too busy to sit for a cuddle but you should be able to see their personalities whilst they play.

They should have clear eyes with no discharge, with clean ears and bottoms. Their tummies should look full but not bloated.

Don't forget that Mists won't develop their full eye colour, coat colour and texture until they're two years old.



A beautiful brown marbled Australian Mist.

Did you know?

A chocolate marbled Mist kitten called Willow appeared in several episodes of Australian soap opera, 'Neighbours'.

Health & welfare

"We have not had any health issues that are specific to the Mists," says Tricia, adding: "Although one Mist was DNA-tested in the early days of GCCF recognition and found to be a Pyruvate kinase deficiency (PKDef) carrier.

"Breeders now test routinely for PKDef in our breeding cats. No others have proved positive but it would be easily bred out by ensuring that no two carriers are mated."

In terms of grooming requirements, the Mists' short coats don't need much maintenance. A quick brush once a week is usually enough, and, of course, cuddles and strokes will help to keep a coat in good condition!



A gorgeous mix of brown and chocolate kittens.

Rescue me

Tricia says that as breeders are very careful about who they place kittens with, it's very rare that Australian Mists come into rescue. If an owner can no longer keep a cat for any reason, breeders will usually try to rehome him themselves.

She adds: "We do have a welfare programme where we work together to ensure potential new owners and available cats are matched.

"You may need to go on a waiting list as very few become available. Occasionally, a breeder will neuter breeding cats and they may be rehomed."

Welfare officers' contact details can be found on **www.australianmistcats.co.uk**

Living With Australian Mists

Hazel Brett describes her hilarious and heart-warming life with Valin and Vigo — also known as Piglet and Nutter!



Vigo.

"I first heard about Australian Mists when I was looking for Burmese kittens. I'd had Burmese cats before and, having recently lost a dear old stray cat who walked in on me and stayed (for 18 years!), I thought it might be time to get a couple of Burmese again — preferably before I was sought out by another homeless cat who wouldn't tolerate another one in the house!

"I happened across Australian Mists on the Internet and was immediately intrigued — as well as won over by the adorable kitten pics, I'll admit. I contacted Tricia Bristow — having in the interim (of course) inherited another stray, Pud, who was (of course) showing every sign of not being terribly open to the idea of any feline housemates.

"Valin and Vigo are full brothers, now aged one year. Valin (aka Piglet) loves his grub and anything edible has to be firmly locked away. He'll nick biscuits, cake, cheese, sandwiches, chips — well, pretty much anything! He can open the fridge too.

"Valin is the very cuddly one who loves laps, beds and 'helping' around the house. How anyone changes duvet covers without him, I just don't know! He is a strong character — the perfect Mist temperament — always happy, and never stops purring.



Valin.

"He sometimes wishes his brother was anyone but Vigo, so he could get some sleep, but they adore each other really. He even likes the vet! His ambition: to learn how to use the tin opener.

"Vigo (aka Nutter) is sometimes described as the Duracell Bunny. He's always busy playing, chasing, climbing, or getting muddy. Like his brother, he's also a huge help around the house — he loves interior design, preferring everything on the floor.

"He has a very different personality to Valin but he's also utterly adorable. He loves laps — when he has time — and playing with his many toys.

"Vigo eats when he can fit it into his busy schedule and he sleeps only when completely exhausted. His ambition: to defeat the cat-proof fencing around the garden (ProtectaPet® fencing — excellent investment, has been severely stress-tested!).

"They are great company — very funny, intelligent and communicative. Valin will gently tap you to indicate what he wants; Vigo prefers a more direct approach. He wakes early and drops his favourite toy on my face at around 5am most mornings to see if I fancy playing yet.

"Both sleep in the bed and would mostly sleep through a nuclear attack! They have perfected the very-sad-cat approach if it looks like you're going out.

"When they first arrived, they won Pud over straight away. This seemed to involve convincing her she was their mum. In no time at all, they were sleeping in her basket and she was washing them.

"They also completely accepted a rather lonely/misunderstood Bengal boy who joined the gang a short while after they arrived. He had become a delinquent in his former home, but no longer has time to think about doing bad things — Vigo keeps him busy!

"I work at home which means they don't get left alone very much at all. Valin sleeps wrapped around my neck sometimes when I'm working. Once on a teleconference, everybody dialled off and back on as there was such a funny noise on the line. I couldn't hear it and then realised Valin was dozing with his nose on the microphone — purring loudly!

"Vigo brings me earthworms whilst I'm working, in case I need extra sustenance. He likes to jump up on my lap and drop them right on my keyboard. You have to congratulate him or he gets quite upset!

"Australian Mists are the perfect cats! They need company and devotion but they give a huge amount back in return. They have the most amazing temperaments — they are real people in their own right."

Is this the cat for you?

If you're looking for an adaptable lap cat who can provide love and laughs without too much chaos, look no further than the Australian Mist.

As they're so people-friendly, Mists don't cope too well on their own and may become stressed or destructive if it happens too often. However, if there's another cat or dog for company, they should be fine.

As Mists have been bred to be indoor-only cats, you won't need a garden — although if you do have an outdoor area, you can always find a way for your Mists to enjoy some cat-proofed time outside.

Tricia says the breed is also fine to live with other pets and animal-savvy children, and many have been happily homed as adults with elderly and disabled people.

www.facebook.com/yourcatmagazine
@yourcatmagazine
catchat@yourcat.co.uk
www.yourcat.co.uk/cat-breed-profiles



Six per cent of pets are bought online.

Welfare on the web

Buying your kitten online may seem like a good idea — but such a purchase could have unanticipated results.

Did you know?
In PAAG's first six months, it helped to remove 100,000 bad adverts from the web.

Perhaps you've spotted the most adorable kitten on a classified advertising website, or maybe word has spread on Facebook of a litter for sale in a nearby village: you're sure to have come across some form of cat commerce whilst browsing on the Internet.

The digital revolution has introduced a brand new way of shopping and most of us have clicked our way to new clothes, furniture, or even the weekly food shop — but what about animals?

"We are all becoming part of the online shopping and impulse buying culture," states PDSA vet, Vicki Larkham-Jones. "And people selling pets are capitalising on that — but a cat is a living being; it's not like other sorts of shopping."

The veterinary charity has a concerned interest in the 'trend', and has recently released the findings of its fifth PDSA Animal Wellbeing (PAW) Report, produced in conjunction with YouGov.

The report revealed that buying pets on a whim with little to no prior research can have serious repercussions on animal welfare. As a result, PDSA has launched the #PawsFirst campaign to highlight the problems of rushing to buy an animal without fully understanding his needs.

Vicki remarks: "We found that only four per cent of owners took advice from a vet before getting a pet. That's shocking. They'll go on the Internet and talk to their family and friends, but there is no real research done.

"When you think about how much people look into planning their holidays or choosing their new phone online, it's a real problem."

"WE REGULARLY SEE PETS THAT FALL ILL WITHIN HOURS OF BEING BOUGHT ONLINE, INCLUDING KITTENS THAT ARE REALLY POORLY WITH CAT FLU OR FLEA ANAEMIA."

Sophia Khan, media officer at Blue Cross, agrees: "The ease of browsing and buying a pet online means that pets are often bought without enough consideration of the reality.

"Our rehoming centres regularly take in pets from people who have bought them as an impulse purchase and then realise they can't cope with them after all. This is why it's vital to do lots of research before getting a pet, to make sure you have the time and resources to care for them."

UNHEALTHY SPENDING

Although PDSA's PAW Report found only six per cent of pets are bought via an online advert, and one per cent via social media, the growing popularity of online shopping foreshadows the potential for irresponsible breeders to cash in on unsuspecting animal lovers.

"The process of buying a cat isn't that black and white," continues Vicki. "Repeated adverts such as those from charities, rehoming centres and approved breeders are usually fine, but there are less scrupulous websites and social media sites that have no regard for cat welfare.

"We've found that nearly a million cats are not neutered. People who breed cats professionally are generally good at looking after their cats and putting their welfare first, but there are 'accidental' breeders who don't put the wellbeing of cats at the forefront."

Sadly, it could be considered a 'lucky break' to buy a kitten online whose only problem is not being neutered. All too often, Blue Cross, PDSA and countless others care for web-bought animals who are suffering from an array of conditions.

Vicki says: "We've seen lots of kittens that were born to cats who hadn't been vaccinated. They can suffer from all sorts: conjunctivitis, eye ulcers, respiratory problems. It's very expensive if you buy a pet with existing medical conditions!"

Sophia adds: "At our Blue Cross hospitals, our vets see first-hand problems resulting from bad online adverts and sellers. We regularly see pets that fall ill within hours of being bought online, including kittens that are really poorly with cat flu or flea anaemia. A further potential pitfall is kittens that are sold as vaccinated but actually aren't."

In addition, some online vendors are selling kittens that aren't old enough to be safely separated from their mothers. Not only does this increase the chance of health problems, it can also have a behavioural effect, as the kitten misses out on learning important socialisation and life skills from his mum.

"WE ARE ALL BECOMING PART OF THE ONLINE SHOPPING AND IMPULSE BUYING CULTURE, AND PEOPLE SELLING PETS ARE CAPITALISING ON THAT."

PROTECTING CATS AND BUYERS

In response to the alarming rise of inappropriate, misleading and sometimes illegal advertisements of pets online, several organisations, including Blue Cross, Cats Protection and PDSA, formed the Pet Advertising Advisory Group (PAAG) in 2001.

"Legislation covering the sale of pets is not fit for purpose," explains Sophia. "There are no laws governing the sale of pets online."

Recognising that it's unrealistic to pursue a ban on all online pet adverts, PAAG instead works with vendor websites to remove the ads that promote or indicate unsafe, irresponsible selling. As part of this, it's compiled a set of Minimum Standards for websites to follow in order to protect buyers and dissuade harmful breeding and advertising.

Despite the potential risks of buying kittens online, not all Internet adverts should be regarded with suspicion. Instead, owners are advised to practise caution when finding a kitten on the web — and there are steps you can take to protect you as a buyer and ensure the wellbeing of your new kitty.

As well as checking that a website follows the Minimum Standards, you can ensure you're making a safe online purchase by:

- Thoroughly researching pet ownership beforehand so that you know what you're letting yourself in for
- Insisting on seeing the kitten's mum and making sure he is old enough to leave her (at least eight weeks)
- Checking where the kitten lives is clean and well-supplied for his needs
- Asking for a written medical history and a written agreement that the purchase is subject to a satisfactory vet check-up within 72 hours
- Making sure you know where the kitten came from.

If you're not looking for a pedigree kitten, don't forget there are thousands of unwanted cats and kittens (with full health checks) waiting for forever homes at charities and shelters across the country!

Of course, not all online adverts are a front for irresponsible breeding and poorly pets; many owners find healthy, happy kittens on websites every day. As long as you take your time making a considered purchase, you're more likely to bring home a contented kitty — whilst, at the same time, supporting good selling practice. ■

PAAG's Minimum Standards

PAAG encourages vendor websites to implement its Minimum Standards, which include:

- **Running automated checks for 'blacklisted' terms**
- **Ensuring the pet's age is shown**
- **Including recent photographs of the animal being advertised**
- **Banning adverts offering stud animals, animals in season or animals 'for rent' or 'loan'.**

A full list can be found online at paag.org.uk/standards



Research thoroughly before buying a kitten.

Feline Focus

Devon Rex

PURRSONALITY

There's never a dull moment with the Devon Rex! These cheeky monkeys will keep you entertained with their high-powered antics. They're super smart and will investigate everything — and don't be surprised if they 'help' you out around the house, before settling down (briefly!) for cuddles and kisses with their favourite humans.

HEALTH & WELFARE

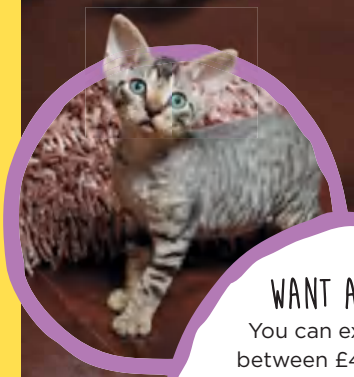
Devon Rex are low-maintenance and require little grooming, although you will need to clean their ears regularly with cotton wool and warm water. Some Devons are prone to the yeast infection Malassezia dermatitis or food intolerances, but they're generally quite a healthy breed.

THEY'VE GOT THE LOOK

These bat-eared, big-eyed beauties are available in any colour in tabby, tortie or smoke patterns, with or without white markings. Their short fur has a woolly texture and their short, brittle whiskers are sometimes referred to as 'designer stubble'. You're bound to fall in love with their muscular bodies and long legs!

HISTORY & ORIGINS

The first Devon Rex was called Kirlee, born through a natural mutation in Devon in 1959. Kirlee was believed to be fathered by a large, black stray with woolly curls, and he was bred with two Cornish Rex queens to continue his line — so all Devon Rexes have Cornish Rex ancestors.



WANT A KITTEN?

You can expect to pay between £450 and £525 for a Devon Rex kitten. These babies do vary in appearance though, so don't worry if you come across a hairless kitten — his coat will grow through soon enough!

THE CAT FOR YOU?

You'll need a lot of patience and energy if you want to be a Devon Rex owner. They love human company and will stick to you like a shadow, so make sure that you are just as devoted to them! If you are out of the house quite a lot, your Devon will prefer a companion as he won't like to be left alone.

BREEDER DIARY

New arrivals

Norwegian Forest breeder Adele Goff introduces us to her latest bundles of joy!


Comet.


Polaris.

Wow — what a busy month we have had! Bright and early at 6.30am one Saturday morning, we headed off to Doncaster for a double cat show. It was an interesting trip with one of the cats singing in the back of the car non-stop, but it didn't stop our friend Joe sleeping most of the way!

It was a long and exhausting day stewarding, but very rewarding. Our girl Snowrock Athene (also known as Mojo) was on her best behaviour and gained two challenge certificates, making her a Champion at less than a year old. We were very proud of her — we floated home!

I was still floating later in the week when I finally got a call from my friend Linda. My hubby set off to meet her and arrived home several hours later with a very special delivery, Noynarock Torro. Torro was the only entire cat from any matings that our stud boy King had. Sadly, we lost King last year. Having Elvis (Son of the King as he has been nicknamed) join us here at Snowrock is a dream come true. Elvis has so many qualities from his father, it is uncanny; he's a truly special boy.

After a very busy 10 days, it was then time to prepare for the arrival of Millie's kittens. Millie never goes a full 65 days and has been known to surprise us six days early — for this reason, we needed to be ready! Sunday morning and at 63 days, Millie was a little restless but would not go in her box, so we thought she may be able to hold out to day 65! No, after an evening of in and out the box, only staying put when I sat with her and rubbed her belly, she decided she was ready. I knew it was going to be a long night!

By morning, there were six gorgeous bundles of fur, a very happy and contented mum... and an exhausted me! The babies are rapidly putting on weight and growing to be lovely little mini Norwegian Forest cats!

See you next month with more news on the growing kittens... ■


Millie and her kittens.


Millie's kittens.


Elvis.

NEXT MONTH...

Millie's gorgeous kittens are growing fast, as Adele explains.

FIND A KITTEN

Welcome to our pedigree kitten directory! The listing includes hundreds of breeders whose entries are colour-coded to help you find kittens local to you.

SCOTLAND NORTH EAST YORKSHIRE EAST MIDLANDS EAST ANGLIA
LONDON SOUTH EAST SOUTH WEST WEST MIDLANDS WALES NORTH WEST

Australian Mist





Bengal



See **JACOU** Burmese
See **ACORNPAWS** British Shorthair

Birman



SNOWWITCH BIRMANS AND SIBERIANS. Birmans in seal, blue, chocolate, lilac, solid and tabbies, home reared ,wonderful temperaments. Blue boy at stud. Siberians in most colours. Tel: 01634 230921.

ATAKAD Birmans, blues, seals, reds and tabbies. Kittens available now to permanent, loving homes. Lovely temperaments house-reared, registered/ vaccinated/ insured. Also red and seal points at stud. Tel: 01754 820493 (Lincs). theresa@dakata.co.uk

British Shorthair



HIGHREGAL BRITISH SHORTHAIR KITTENS 2 Blue Tortie and White females and 2 Blue Cream females, ready to go 29th January. Fully vacc/ GCCF Reg/ins & microchipped. Kittens are very affectionate raised in family home. Good with children, dogs and other cats. If interested call Rita on 02083080192 (Orpington, Kent.)

IDLEBECK British. Chocolates, Lilacs, Blacks & Blues plus related Torties & Bicolours. Carefully home-reared, GCCF registered. Tel: 01483 235748 (Surrey) Email: british@idlebeck.co.uk www.idlebeck.co.uk

To advertise here please call 01476 859838 or email ads@bpgmedia.co.uk

ACORNPAWS BRITISH SHORTHAIRS. Blue, Silver, Cream, Tabbies & Spotties. Bengals – all colours. Kittens usually available. Studs available in both breeds. Tel: 01704 841991 (Lancs) email: acorncattery@aol.com www.acorncattery.com



Burmese



JACOU BURMESE KITTENS. All colours sometimes available. All kittens brought-up indoors in loving family surroundings. Tel June 0161 980 2383 (Cheshire/Manchester) Email: jacoucats@googlemail.com

BURMESE CAT CLUB recommends kittens should be at least 13 weeks old before leaving, registered/fully vaccinated house-trained, in good health and well adjusted. Kitten list 01622 730861 Rescue & Rehoming 01483 828625 Lost & Found 01787 278912 www.burmesecatclub.com

Chinchilla



VILLIERS CHINCHILLAS & GOLDEN PERSIANS Sired By IMP/GR CH CH parents. Working with German, Dutch & English lines. Vac/Reg/Ins, PKD Negative tested & Microchipped. Kittens available. Tel: 01406 259 232 Mob: 07960 883 233 email: janet.r@fsmail.net www.villierschinchillas.co.uk

CASZAN CHINCHILLAS AND GOLDENS, along with the dilute (Blue series), GCCF/Tica Reg, Breeding from European/ USA lines and are PKD Negative. Kittens are health checked, vaccinated and insured, please visit our website at www.caszan.co.uk, enquiries to Carole 01932 240215 or E-Mail info@caszan.co.uk.

TAMOSAH PERSIANS. Specialising in Chinchilla Persians & Pewter Persians. GCCF reg. PKD neg. Cattery. All kittens fully vaccinated and micro-chipped. Sue Danks 01939 210455 Email: sue@tamosahpersians.co.uk www.tamosahpersians.co.uk

British Shorthair



Colourpoint Persian



See **AMORAMIST** Maine Coon

Cornish Rex



RASTAKESHI CORNISH & DEVON REX. Quality Cornish Rex kittens available to loving homes, bred with love and care. Tel: 0114 2403306 www.rastakeshi.co.uk

Devon Rex



See **EMERISLE** Ragdoll
See **RASTAKESHI** Cornish Rex

Exotic Shorthair



See **EMERISLE** Ragdoll

Golden Persian



See **VILLIERS** Chinchilla
See **CASZAN** Chinchilla

Maine Coon



AMORAMIST MAINE COONS, Breeding Large Boned. Silver and Brown, selfs and many other colours with or without white in tabby. Maine Coon kittens currently available. Soon to be breeding Pure whites. Enquiries welcome. T: Mareen 01326 240907 (SW Cornwall) E: mareenholdenritchie@yahoo.co.uk www.amoramist.com

Norwegian Forest





Oriental



OOTHA Siamese, Orientals and Foreign White. Good type, home-reared kittens from show stock. FeLV/FIV tested. For details contact Marjorie Davidson-Smith Tel: 01707 264450 (Herts). Email: pentirah5@ntlworld.com

See **RASTAKESHI** Cornish Rex

Persian



PURPLEPEARLPERSIANS. Registered breeder of Persians and Chinchillas. Kittens available now, all registered, PKD negative, inoculated, full pedigree. Contact alixnichols@talktalk.net Tel: 01902 842131.



See **VILLIERS** Chinchilla
See **CASZAN** Chinchilla
See **TAMOSAH** Chinchilla

Ragdoll



LEIBLING RAGDOLLS gorgeous babies. Indoor homes preferred. Both Parents have been HCM & PKD tested and can be seen. Registered, Vaccinated, Insured.Member of TBRCC Tel: 01225 719057 (Wiltshire) www.leiblingcats.com

VISIT US AT www.emerisle-cats.co.uk to see dozens of professionally taken photos of our cats, kittens and famous show cats. 11 years running *PRBCC Breeder of the Year*. T: 07774 650217 E: fitzpatrick.jeanette@googlemail.com Available to view shortly Tiffanie - Scottish Fold - Ragdoll kittens



WOODYPAWS RAGDOLLS. Beautiful kittens from Championship lines. Raised within the home, Microchipped/ Vaccinated/Insured. Parents tested clear for HCM and PKD. GCCF registered. TBRCC registered Breeder. Tel: Debbie/Alan 01268 710409 (Essex) www.woodypaws.co.uk



Scottish Fold



See **EMERISLE** Ragdolls

Siamese





POLLYBEE SIAMESE. Specialising in beautiful Blue & Lilac point Siamese, Tabby point Siamese sometimes available. Kittens available now. Tel: 01707 257 323 email: paula@pollybeecats.myzen.co.uk www.pollybeesiamese.co.uk





See **RASTAKESHI** Cornish Rex

Sphynx



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HOW TO...
CHOOSE THE RIGHT TOYS FOR YOUR KITTEN



BY PDSA VET VICKI LARKHAM-JONES

Regular activity is very important for young cats — mental stimulation and physical activity are essential for the healthy development of their bodies and minds.

Kittens also develop an important bond with their owners by playing with them and having fun.

PDSA vet Vicki Larkham-Jones says: "Playing with your kitten will encourage natural behaviour, like stalking, and chasing. This behaviour should always be directed at inanimate objects, not other pets or people, so carefully selected kitten toys are ideal — allowing your kitten to develop natural hunting behaviours safely. This will also help him to keep fit and healthy and his brain alert and active."

Follow these simple tips to pick the right toys and get the most out of playtime with your kitten:

- Using toys that move quickly and unpredictably will encourage chasing and hunting-type behaviour. Fishing rod-style toys are ideal for this, as are toys that move by themselves or ones that the cat can bat around. Just remember to keep your hands out of harm's way
- Toys that make noises can be attractive, as well as those that are shiny or scented with catnip. The toy should be small enough for the kitten to move around but not too small for your kitten to swallow, as these can pose a choking hazard or cause nasty blockages, which can be very dangerous
- Toys don't have to be expensive, as long as they are safe — cardboard boxes with cut-out holes for the kitten to jump in and paper bags that rustle will encourage your kitten to focus and concentrate. Just look out for sharp staples in cardboard boxes and cut the handles of paper bags.
- Feeder toys, where the food is placed in a ball or similar toy, make a cat 'work' for his food. Just make sure that any food is part of your kitten's daily allowance so he doesn't eat too much and put on weight
- Cats love climbing and exploring, so kitten activity centres where he can safely climb, stretch and perch are also great fun
- Never allow your kitten to play with wool or string — it can very easily be swallowed and get stuck in his intestines and around his tongue.

As they grow into adults, cats still enjoy playing and will continue to benefit from the essential physical activity and mental stimulation that regular play provides.



Use toys that move unpredictably.

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READER'S KITTEN OF THE MONTH

Jennifer Digweed wouldn't be without her mischievous duo!



Magnus and Lara.

"Meet my four-month-old Norwegian Forest cats, Magnus and Lara!" says Jennifer from Hungerford, Berks. "They may look like all they do is sleep but that's because this is the only time they are still long enough to take a photo of them!

"Having never had a pair of littermates before, it has been a real pleasure to see how they interact together. They want to do whatever the other one is doing — if one is sitting with you and starts purring, the other one will hear and come running. They will also desert you if they can hear the other one playing with a toy, so it goes both ways! It amazes me how hard they can wrestle and play together without hurting each other. Their favourite toys are a tunnel and anything with feathers.

"Their arrival was a bit of a shock to our older cats, but getting two was definitely the right thing to do as they keep each other occupied. The older cats seem to be playing more and have regained a bit of youth through having them around.

"Although Magnus and Lara aren't lap cats, they are actually very cuddly when they're tired, you just have to choose your moment!

"They used to look very similar — you could only tell them apart as Lara had more white on her body and a wider white nose. Already now, Magnus has a really manly face and big arms and legs, where Lara is very long and elegant with a more delicate face. I can't wait to see how they develop into adults together." ■



COULD YOUR KITTEN BE OUR KITTEN OF THE MONTH?
If featured here, you could win £100 worth of Hill's Science Plan kitten food, including eight boxes of Hill's Kitten pouches and a 5kg bag of dry food! Send your entries, including a photo and around 250 words, to **chloe@yourcat.co.uk** Don't forget to include your name, your kitten's name and your full address!



Join the club

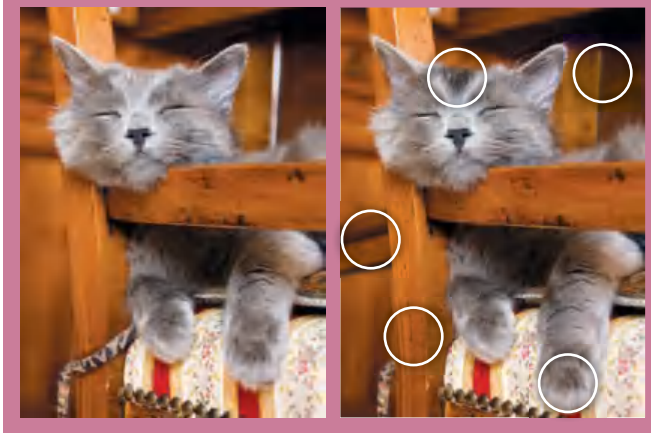
If you're thinking of buying a pedigree cat, then a club can provide you with all you need to know. You'll be able to find out where to find a good breeder, discover what it's like to own one of these cats, plus learn more about the breed's characteristics and colours available. You'll also be able to get involved with shows and social activities and enjoy your cat even more!



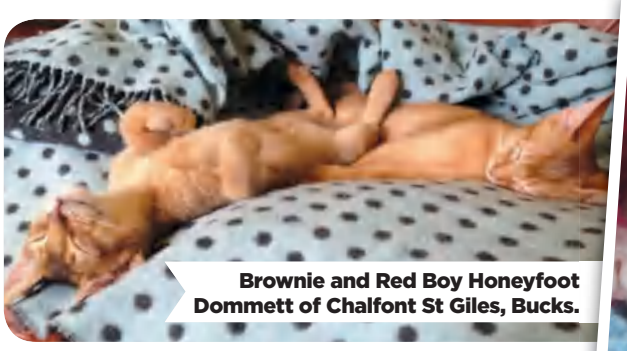




SPOT THE DIFFERENCE ANSWERS FROM PAGE 57



KITTEN GALLERY



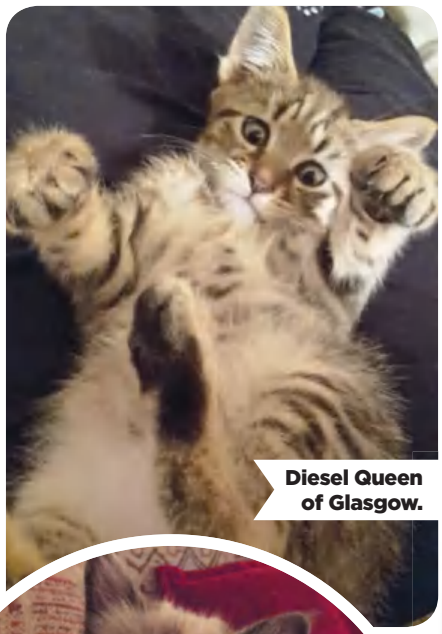
Brownie and Red Boy Honeyfoot Dommett of Chalfont St Giles, Bucks.



Rajah Finch of Nottingham.



Jasper Dalton of Cirencester, Glos.

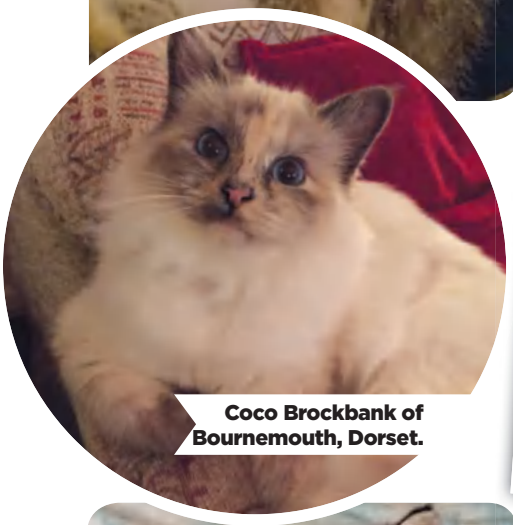


Diesel Queen of Glasgow.

WINNER!



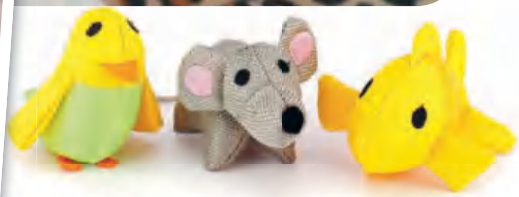
Khaleesi and Nova Colley of Dumfermline, Fife.



Coco Brockbank of Bournemouth, Dorset.



Paloma Cooper of Chorley, Lancs.



Send your kitten photos to **pawtraits@yourcat.co.uk** with your full name, address, phone number and your kitten's name. Every kitten printed within our gallery* will win a catnip toy, courtesy of Britain's biggest manufacturer of eco-friendly pet products, Beco Pets! Stuffed with recycled plastic bottles and filled with top-quality catnip, Beco Pets' toys are extra-soft so they're great to cuddle.

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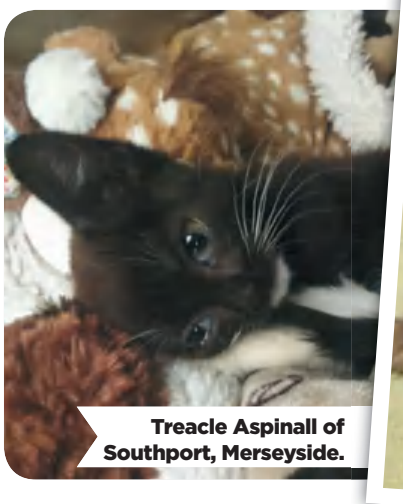


Romeo Macleod of London.



Kiri Haas of Newton Abbot, Devon.

Turn the page for more readers' pics!



Treacle Aspinall of Southport, Merseyside.



Zebedee Davis of Worcester.



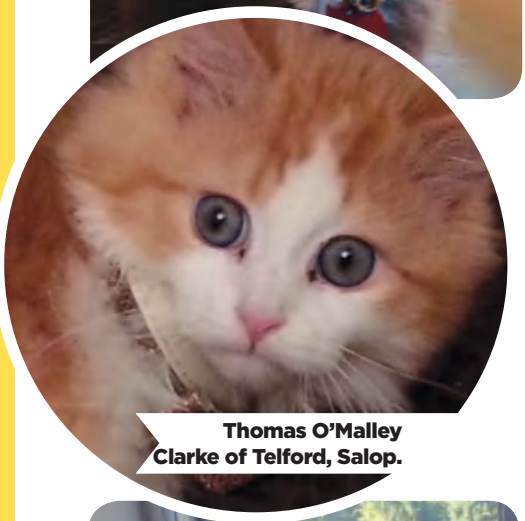
Ozzy Spence of Batley, West Yorks.



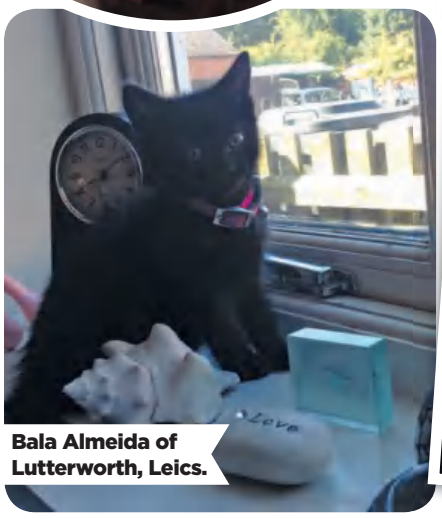
Lily Ceci of St Ives, Cambs.



Oscar Sheppard of Andover, Hants.



Thomas O'Malley Clarke of Telford, Salop.



Bala Almeida of Lutterworth, Leics.



Tabs and Tipsy Eads of Tidworth, Wilts.



Tansy Stewart of Glasgow.

MEET THE TEAM

Your Cat magazine is published monthly by BPG Media Ltd, 1-6 Buckminster Yard, Main Street, Buckminster, Grantham, Lincs. NG33 5SB
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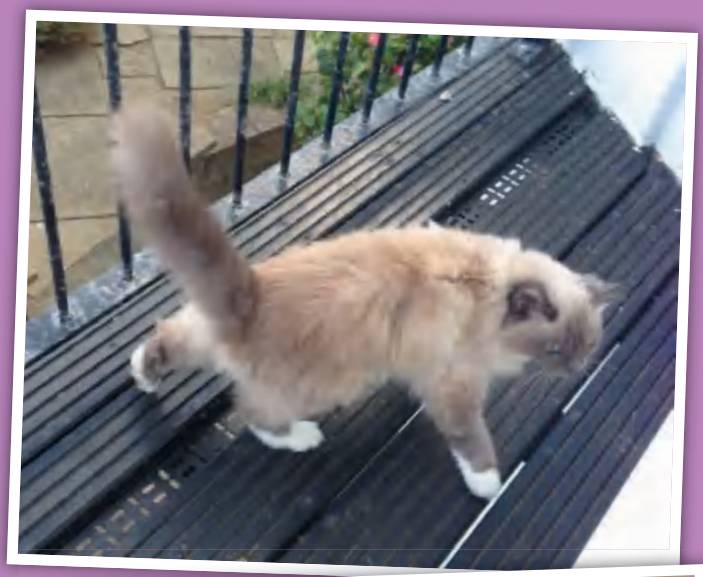
Golden oldie of the month

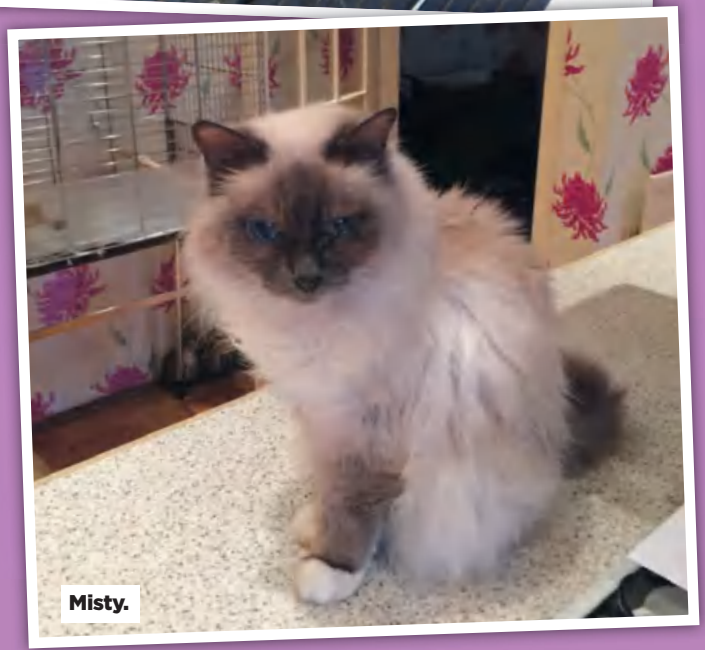
At 23 years old and still going strong, Misty couldn't have wished for a better life than with Lady Valerie White.

"We adopted our 23-year-old seal-point Birman from the RSPCA in 2001 at the age of almost nine years old," says Lady White from Nottingham. "Her owners had divorced, and neither party wanted this quiet, friendly, but happy loner. Misty has enjoyed her long life with us surrounded by our other pets, many of which have passed on during her lifetime. She currently shares her home with an Airedale Terrier, an African grey parrot and three other cats.

"Misty likes to spend her time high up in a box on top of our utility room cupboards. She is still able to jump from the floor to the worktop, then another jump up to the top of the cupboards, where she has a cushioned cardboard box — her favourite place to sleep! She has always enjoyed exploring our wired-in garden. Even now, in her grand old age, she will go through the cat flap to do her business and have a little wander around.

"After recently suffering a stroke, the prognosis was not good, so I decided to take her home and give her lots of TLC, including hand-feeding. I am delighted to say that she has made a remarkable recovery and is now back to her old self, jumping onto the worktops (but not quite as far as the top of the cupboards!)." ■





Misty.

Have you got a senior cat at home?

If you own a golden oldie (over 12 years) and you'd love to see them in the magazine, simply email your cat's story (around 200 words) and clear, non-blurry images (over 1MB in size) to **chloe@yourcat.co.uk**

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Showtime!

Compiled by Anthony Nichols.

NATIONAL CAT OF THE YEAR

The prestigious National Cat Club is the UK's oldest club, with its first show held in 1887. To join the ranks of its Best in Show winners is a great honour, one which comes but once a year.

Last year's show saw the award go to red and white Persian Olympian Bronze Imperial Grand Champion Riascatz Final Countdown, known as Joey. In fact, Joey gained his Olympian Bronze title on the day, making it especially exciting for owner Deborah Flint.

Deborah says: "He's named after the song 'The Final Countdown' by Europe and Joey Tempest, who wrote the song and is the lead singer. Joey is one of two kittens I had from Marie Hill when she wrapped up her breeding programme. I have loved him since I first saw his photo with his litter sisters at a couple of weeks old. I have been showing him since he was a kitten and he has won six overall Best in Show awards this past year, and multiple best of variety Persian awards."



Joey with Best in Show judge Neil Carter.

QUEEN OF THE REXES

The recent Rex Cat Club show saw curly-coated cats of all four breeds recognised by the GCCF competing together.

Emma Warrener's Devon Rex Grand Champion & Grand Premier Peribrook Crazy Daisy was given the honour of being Best in Show — a great achievement for a mature lady of 11 years! The tortie silver tabby girl was praised by the judges for her sweet nature and terrific coat, while Best in Show judge Lynda Ashmore described her as a very cheeky Devon, typical of the breed!

LOLA OFF TO A FLYING START

Another Devon Rex made a great achievement at the annual Rex Coated and AOV Cat Club show, becoming Best in Show on her very first outing!

Dawn Harris's kitten Rogus Eartha Kitt, also known as Lola, was making her show debut and so impressed the judges that she took top honours.

Lola's breeder, Sandra Humphreys Olliffe, says: "She's the third generation from a Burmese outcross programme, proving that outcrossing is a very successful route to fit, healthy, happy cats. As a kitten growing up, she was always adventurous and very affectionate. Neither of us expected her to reach such a high on her debut. It was very emotional for us both as she progressed through the stages winning her open class, Best of Breed, best Devon Rex, best foreign kitten and then overall Best in Show."

Dawn adds: "I would like to say how proud I am to be Lola's new owner. I was really nervous as it was also my first time showing a cat. I didn't have any expectations of winning but, lo and behold, she won. I was in shock but so happy, I cried tears of joy. I would like to thank Sandra for letting me have this special little Devon girl. Lola's win was a fantastic achievement for us all."



Lola.

SHOW DATES

GCCF

January 17

Cameo, Pewter & Smoke Society, Gnosall Village Hall, Lowfield Lane, Gnosall, Stafford ST20 0ET.

January 23

1) Preston & Blackpool Cat Club, Preston's College Sports Centre, Saint Vincent's Road, Preston, Lancs. PR2 8UR.
2) Burmese Cat Association, Ardley with Fewcott Village Hall, Ardley Road, Fewcott, Bicester, Oxon OX27 7PA.

January 30

1) United Chinchilla Association, Great Ashby Community Centre, Whitehorse Lane, Stevenage, Herts. SG1 6NH.
2) Celtic Long Hair & Semi Long Hair Cat Society, Chepstow Leisure Centre, Welsh Street, Chepstow, Monm. NP16 5LR.

February 6

Gwynedd Cat Club and Shropshire Cat Club, Fenton Manor Sports Complex, City Road, Fenton, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 2RR.

February 13

Croydon Cat Club and Southern Counties Cat Club, Rivermead Leisure Complex, Richfield Avenue, Reading, West Berks. RG1 8EQ.

February 20

1) Seal Point Siamese Cat Club and Siamese Cat Society of the British Empire, Bugbrooke Community Centre, Camp Close, Bugbrooke, Northampton NN7 3RW.
2) Russian BAC, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL.

February 21

Midland Cat Club of Ireland, Abbey Court Hotel Nenagh, Old Dublin Road, Co. Tipperary, Ireland.

TICA

February 13-14

NaturallyTICA, Doncaster School for the Deaf, Leger Way, Doncaster DN2 6AY.

FIFE

January 24

Felis Britannica Winners' One Day International Cat Show, The Sports Connexion, Leamington Road, Ryton-on-Dunsmore, Coventry CV8 3FL.

Dates and venues correct at the time of going to press. Before setting out, it would be wise to check with the organisers.

Show lingo

Show catalogue: A booklet which is available at shows listing all of the classes and the cats entered in them. Exhibitors 'mark up' their catalogues by noting down the results next to each class.

In the March issue...

On sale February 12!

KITTEN SPECIAL!

Everything you need to know about caring for your tiny bundle of joy!





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(*UK only)

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Photo feature (page 6)
- ☐ 'Walter Chandoha: The Cat Photographer'

Book shop (page 10)
- ☐ 'Black Cat, White Cat' by Silvia Borando

Tigga Towers competition (page 19)
- ☐ The answer is:

Freebies (page 25)
- ☐ TopLife Milk (Please tell us whether you have a ☐ cat or ☐ kitten)
- ☐ John Paul Pet™ Grooming Bundle
- ☐ Pet Munchies Premium Gourmet Cat Treats
- ☐ National Pet Show Tickets

Puzzle (page 57)
- ☐ The five-letter answer is:

Send to: Competitions (February), Your Cat, BPG Media, 1-6 Buckminster Yard, Main Street, Buckminster, Grantham, Lincs. NG33 5SB.

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